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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Website: salarnews.in www.magzter.com 14 JULY 2025 | MONDAY | BENGALURU | 18 MUHARRAM, 1447 AH Vol 4 | Issue No 190 | Pages: 8

Accusation of human error hurtful: Pilot body

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA) has strongly condemned accusations of human error and pilot suicide following the Air India Flight AI 171 crash, calling them "deeply insensitive" and a "gross violation" of ethical standards.

In a statement issued after the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) released its preliminary crash report, the ICPA said unfounded speculation—particularly suggestions of pilot suicide—was not only baseless but also a disservice to the dignity of the profession.

"There is absolutely no basis for such a claim at this stage," said the ICPA. "Invoking such a serious allegation based on incomplete or preliminary information is irresponsible and hurtful to the individuals and families involved."

Air India Flight 171 was en route to London Gatwick from Ahmedabad on June 12 when it crashed into BJ Medical College minutes after take-off, killing 260 people—241 onboard and 19 on the ground.

The sole survivor is a 40-year-old British national, Vishwas Kumar Ramesh.

The AAIB's 15-page preliminary report released on July 12 revealed that fuel to both engines was cut off seconds after take-off.

The fuel control switches were found in the "cutoff" position. Cockpit voice recordings captured one pilot asking, "Why did you cut off?" to which the other replied, "I didn't."

The comments come at a time when people from certain quarters are opining that fuel switches could have been cut off by a pilot. *—PTI*

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Axiom-4 crew to return to Earth on 14 July

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

After almost 14 days in space, NASA's Axiom-4 team are ready for their trip back to Earth on 14 July. The SpaceX Dragon spacecraft carrying Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla, along with three other astronauts, is arranged to undock around 4.35pm IST on Monday. The spacecraft is set to land in the Pacific Ocean near the coast of California, US, around 3pm IST on Tuesday. The Union Minister for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Jitendra Singh, said that the timings may vary by about one hour according to the changes in weather conditions. NASA had released a schedule listing the approximate timings of the spacecraft's undocking on Saturday. The live coverage will stop after 30 minutes of undocking and resume once the spacecraft re-enters. *—Agencies*

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Phase-3 of dengue vaccine trial to end by October: ICMR

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reports that enrolment for the Phase-III clinical trial of DengiAll, India's first indigenous dengue vaccine, is expected to conclude by October. Approximately 10,500 participants are targeted for this trial, with 8,000 already enrolled at centres across Pune, Chennai, Kolkata, Delhi, and Bhubaneswar. The trial will assess the safety and efficacy of the vaccine, which has shown no safety concerns in earlier trials. Dengue remains a significant public health issue in India, and the vaccine aims to provide protection amid increasing infection rates . *—PTI*

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Kashmir leaders 'under house arrest' on Martyrs Day

SRINAGAR, 13 JULY

Several prominent political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir on Sunday claimed they have been placed under house arrest to prevent them from paying homage to the 22 persons killed by the Dogra army on this day in 1931, with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah terming the move as "blatantly undemocratic". There was no official confirmation to the claims. Paying tributes to the 22 people killed, Abdullah likened the 13 July, 1931, incident to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. "The 13 July massacre is our Jallianwala Bagh. The people who laid down their lives did so against the British. Kashmir was being ruled under the British Paramountcy. What a shame that true heroes who fought against British rule in all its forms are today projected as villains only because they were Muslims," Abdullah posted on X. "We may be denied the opportunity to visit their graves today but we will not forget their sacrifices". *—PTI*

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India says no role as ULFA-I claims drones struck Myanmar base

ULFA(I) claims strike killed top leader, 2 others

GUWAHATI, 13 JULY

The proscribed United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) on Sunday alleged that the Indian Army had carried out drone and missile strikes on its camps along the Myanmar border, resulting in multiple casualties. However, the Army has denied any such operation.

In a press statement, ULFA(I) claimed that the drone strikes targeted several of its mobile camps in the early hours, killing Nayan Asom alias Nayan Medhi, the 'chairman' of its 'lower council', and injuring around 19 others. The outfit later alleged that missiles were fired again during the last rites of the slain leader, killing two other senior commanders—'Brigadier' Ganesh Asom and 'Colonel' Pradip Asom—and injuring several members and civilians.

Lt Col Mahendra Rawat, a defence spokesperson, stated: "There are no inputs with the Indian Army of such an operation."

The claims come at a time when Myanmar, ruled by the military junta (Tatmadaw), is experiencing intensified conflict with various insurgent groups. Indian security agencies have long expressed concern over militant camps set up near the India-Myanmar border, particularly by ULFA(I), which operates from this volatile region.

Sources suggest ULFA(I) leader Paresh Barua, believed to be hiding in the China-Myanmar-India border area, is facing his weakest phase, especially after the recent arrest of key commander Rupom Asom by Assam Police in May. *—PTI*

The outfit later alleged that missiles were fired again ***PHOTO: PIXABAY***

Many 'illegal migrants' found in Bihar, EC seeks all-India survey

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

During the ongoing intensive review of Bihar's voter list, Election Commission officials have reported discovering a significant number of individuals from Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. Names of these suspected illegal migrants will be excluded from the final electoral roll, set for publication on 30 September, following thorough investigations post-1 August. This initiative forms part of a nationwide effort to eliminate foreign illegal migrants from electoral rolls. With Bihar's upcoming elections and other state elections scheduled for 2026, the crackdown on illegal migrants is deemed crucial to ensure the integrity of the electoral process across the country. *—PTI*

- Names of these suspected illegal migrants will be excluded from the final electoral roll, set for publication on 30 September, following thorough investigations .

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PHOTO: X

Ex-FS Shringla, lawyer Nikam to join RS

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Former foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, Special Public Prosecutor in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks case Ujjwal Nikam, Kerala BJP leader C Sadanandan Master and Delhi-based historian Meenakshi Jain have been nominated to the Rajya Sabha.

In a notification issued on Saturday night, the Union Home Ministry said the President has nominated the four to the Rajya Sabha.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of article 80 of the Constitution of India, read with clause (3) of that article, the President is pleased to nominate to the Council of States the following persons to fill the vacancies caused due to retirement of nominated members:- Shri Ujjwal Deorao Nikam, Shri C. Sadanandan Master, Shri Harsh Vardhan Shringla and Dr. Meenakshi Jain," the notification said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi welcomed the nominations.

Lauding Nikam's devotion to the legal field and to the Constitution as "exemplary", Modi said he has not only been a successful lawyer but also been at the forefront of seeking justice in important cases. *—PTI*

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Odisha sexual harassment victim suffered 95% burns

BHUBANESWAR, 13 JULE

The condition of the 20-year-old college woman student who set herself on fire in Balasore college campus over an alleged sexual harassment incident is "highly critical" as she suffered burn injury of around 95 per cent, an official of AIIMS Bhubaneswar said on Sunday.

The Odisha government on Saturday suspended the college principal as he "failed" to perform his duties.

Balaore Police arrested the accused teacher Samira Kumar Sahu on Saturday.

The woman was admitted at the AIIMS Bhubaneswar on Saturday and hospital authorities said that the next 48 hours are vital and the victim is not showing any sign of improvement.

"Her kidneys and lungs are also affected. She is on critical care support," AIIMS Bhubaneswar Executive Director Dr Ashutosh Biswas said. He added that her entire body is burnt except for some patches on her face. *—PTI*

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9-member SIT to probe IIM-Calcutta 'rape'

Kolkata, 13 July

Police have constituted a nine-member special investigation team (SIT) to probe into the alleged rape of a woman by a student at the Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta, officials said on Saturday. *—PTI*

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CLASH AT WIMBLEDON

Italy's Jannik Sinner during the men's singles Wimbledon Tennis Championships finals against Spain's Carlos Alcaraz ***PHOTO: PTI***

TIBET A 'THORN' IN TIES: CHINA AHEAD OF JAISHANKAR'S VISIT

BEIJING, 13 JULY

Ahead of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to China on 14–15 July, Beijing has called Tibet-related issues, including the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, a "thorn" in bilateral ties and a "burden" for India.

Jaishankar's visit will be his first since the 2020 Ladakh border clashes.

Tensions escalated after Dalai Lama stated that only his trust could recognise his reincarnation. China insists that only its government can approve next Dalai Lama. *—Agencies*

DELHI DRUNK AUDI DRIVER RUNS OVER 5

NEW DELHI, 12 JULY

A drunk driver of an Audi car allegedly ran over five people, including two couples and an eight-year-old girl, injuring them while they were sleeping on a footpath near Shiva Camp in southwest Delhi's Vasant Vihar area.

The incident occurred at 1.45 am on 9 July and the driver of the car, Utsav Shekhar, was apprehended, he said, adding that his medical reports confirmed that he was drunk at the time of the incident.

By the time officers reached the scene, the injured were taken to hospitals. *— PTI*

GROWING INTOLERANCE

Sena (UBT) men slap man over Marathi

PALGHAR, 13 JULY

A video showing an autorickshaw driver being assaulted by Shiv Sena (UBT) workers in Virar, Palghar district, for allegedly making anti-Marathi remarks has gone viral, intensifying Maharashtra's ongoing language row.

Police confirmed they had seen the video but said no formal complaint had been filed, and therefore no case has yet been registered.

According to sources, the incident was triggered by a four-day-old argument between the driver, originally from Uttar Pradesh, and a scooter rider over overtaking. When asked to speak in Marathi, the driver reportedly refused and insisted on speaking only in Hindi or Bhojpuri. A video of his alleged anti-Marathi rant subsequently surfaced online, sparking backlash. Sena (UBT) workers, including women, are seen slapping the driver near Virar railway station. He is then made to apologise to the scooter rider, his sister, and the state for "insulting" Maharashtra. Virar city Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uday Jadhav, present during the incident, said, "Anyone insulting Marathi language or Maharashtra will get a reply in true Shiv Sena style."

On 1 July, MNS workers slapped a food stall owner in Bhayander for not speaking Marathi, prompting protests by traders. Days later, MNS and other groups led a counter march in Mira Bhayandar to defend Marathi asmita, which saw police detain several activists, including leaders from the Sena (UBT) and NCP. *— PTI*

Screenshot from the video shows the auto-rickshaw driver being beaten up by Shiv Sena (UBT) members ***PHOTO: INSTAGRAM @/SPSC358***

Actor-politician Kota Srinivasa Rao dies at 83

HYDERABAD, 13 JULY

Veteran Telugu actor and former BJP MLA Kota Srinivasa Rao, known for his highly acclaimed performances, passed away here due to age-related ailments on Sunday. He was 83.

Rao, who had been unwell for several years now, breathed his last in the early hours of Sunday at his residence here, film industry sources said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, his Andhra Pradesh counterpart N Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, superstar Chiranjeevi and several other leaders and film personalities condoled the demise.

Rao has acted in about 750 films in Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam and Hindi languages in a career spanning more than four decades.

He debuted in the 1978 film 'Pranam Khareedu', which also marked the debut of superstar Chiranjeevi.

Some of his most acclaimed works include 'Pratighatana', 'Satruvu', 'Ahana Pellanta', 'Hello Brother', 'Money', director Ram Gopal Varma's 'Siva' and 'Gaayam' were some of the films which brought immense fame to Rao. *—PTI*

Pilot body mulls legal recourse in AI crash probe

ALPA-India says no one signed the preliminary report, no experts consulted during the investigations

MUMBAI, 13 JULY

Pilots' grouping ALPA-India on Sunday said it is mulling legal recourse to have its members as part of the investigation into the Air India's Boeing 787-8 plane crash, a day after alleging that AAIB's preliminary report alleged suggestion of a bias towards pilot error was incorrect.

"The preliminary report by the AAIB has been put up on the website. It does not have anyone's signature on it. We want transparency. We had asked for our representation in the investigation panel," ALPA-India President Sam Thomas said.

The Airline Pilots' Association of India (ALPA-India) represents over 800 pilots of airlines and helicopter companies in the country.

It is a member of the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Association (IFALPA), which claims to have 1 lakh pilots from across 100 countries as its members. Against the backdrop of the AAIB's preliminary report,

The Airline Pilots' Association of India (ALPA-India) represents over 800 pilots of airlines and helicopter companies **PHOTO: PTI**

representatives of ALPA-India will meet officials of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday to discuss various issues.

Thomas stressed that its members have domain expertise and can contribute meaningfully in the investigation of the Air India plane crash. The association is mulling legal recourse to ensure that its members are made a part of the investigation team.

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) in its preliminary report on the crash that killed 260 people on June 12 said the fuel switches to the engines were cut off within a gap of 1 second immediately after takeoff and caused confusion in the cockpit of Air India flight AI 171.

"We are once again surprised at the secrecy surrounding these investigations. We are also reiterating the fact that suitably qualified personnel are not taken on board for these crucial investigations," ALPA-India said on Saturday. "We feel that the investigation is being driven in a direction presuming the guilt of pilots and we strongly object to this line of thought"

TOO EARLY FOR CONCLUSIONS

Former AAIB chief Aurobindo Handa said that it was too early to draw conclusions on the role of pilots from the preliminary report. He said the final report will reveal the most probable cause.

"We should allow AAIB to complete the investigation in a fair, unbiased and transparent manner," he said. Handa has investigated more than 100 aircraft accidents, including the Air India Express plane crash in Kozhikode in 2020. *—PTI*

BARRAGE OF INSURANCE CLAIMS FOLLOW AI AIR CRASH

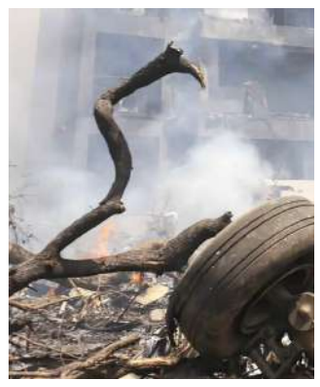
AHMEDABAD, 13 JULY

From hotel booking cancellations to loss of baggage, and from accidental death coverage to trip plan withdrawals, insurance companies have received a range of claims from the kin of the Ahmedabad Air India plane tragedy victims.

The incident has triggered claims under various insurance categories like travel, personal accident, and life insurance, including those from Kisan Credit Card holders.

"We have received claims primarily under travel insurance and personal accident insurance products. These include accidental death, trip cancellations, loss of baggage and hotel cancellations.

"At ICICI Lombard, we are working on a priority basis to provide seamless assistance and ensure timely settlement. We remain committed to supporting our policyholders and



- New India Assurance has settled 7 claims related to personal accidents and 5 group personal accident claims, while Bajaj Allianz General Insurance received personal accidents and marine cargo

their families during this difficult time," Priya Deshmukh, Head Health Products, Operations & Services, ICICI Lombard, said.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance said it has received claims related to personal accidents and marine cargo.

"We have received three claims related to travel personal accidents coverage and one under marine cargo insurance," Bajaj Allianz General Insurance said in response to a PTI query.

Marine cargo insurance typically covers goods in transit via road, rail, air, sea, or courier.

A New India Assurance official said the company has settled seven claims related to personal accidents and five group personal accident claims. In one case, a group personal accident policy covering 4,000 people in Mehsana district resulted in a claim settlement within a week of the crash. *—PTI*

Two leopards found dead in Hassan; poisoning suspected

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

Two leopard carcasses were reportedly found near a railway track in Chenarayapatna, Hassan district. They are believed to have been poisoned.

There was reportedly no sign of the leopards being it by the train.

Conservator of Forests Yedukondalu has sent a team of foresters to assess the cause of death.

Sources believe that the culprits may have dumped the carcasses near the tracks to avoids scrutiny.

This comes shortly after a leopard was found dead near the BRT Tiger Reserve, and another leopard died after being snared in a boar trap in Helebeedu, Hassan.

Similarly, three days ago, a leopard was found dead in a quarry in Chamarajnagar, also allegedly poisoned.

The most recent death comes after a leopard was allegedly poisoned near BRT Tiger Reserve and one in a quarry in Chamarajnagar (pic) **PHOTO: X**

- Although the leopards were found near the railway tracks, there was no sign of them having been hit by the train

Poisoning instances have increased in State.

Five tigers were poisoned in MM Hills wildlife sanctuary on 26 June. *—Salar News*

Three college students drown in Raichur river

RAICHUR, 13 JULY

Three college students from Hassan district reportedly drowned in the Tungabhadra River near Mantralayam in Raichur district. The incident occurred on Saturday when a group of five youths were at the riverbank.

The missing individuals have been identified as Ajith, 20, Sachin, 20, and Pramod, 19, all residents of Jagaval village in Arsikere taluk. All three were pursuing degree courses and had travelled to Mantralayam on Friday.

According to police, the river was in spate due to the release of excess water. Despite warnings from locals, the three students entered the river to swim and were swept away by strong currents. The incident occurred within the jurisdiction of the Mantralayam police station. A search operation was launched on Saturday but was called off due to nightfall. *—Salar News*

A CHILL MOMENT

Horse keepers munch on their lunch during a break, at Cubbon Park in Bengaluru on Sunday. The horse riding experience has been a treat to visitors for years **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Feeding strays a legal necessity, says BBMP

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

The BBMP issued a clarification to its initiative to feed stray dogs, following widespread media and social media coverage, saying the programme was a legal obligation. The Animal Husbandry Department also invited tenders for supplying fresh, balanced food to street dogs at designated feeding locations.

The BBMP stated that they were already providing food to stray dogs last year and the most recent proposal of providing chicken-rice to the animals was an improvement based on lessons learned from the project, after weighing the pros and cons. They added that feeding dogs was part a legal necessity under Animal Birth Control Rules, 2023.

The total cost of the is Rs 2.88 crore, the BBMP clarified. Each BBMP zone will have 100 feeding spots, serving 500 dogs daily for a year. The cost per dog per day is estimated at Rs 19, covering food, transport, and sanitation.

"These feeding points will be identified and monitored by the Assistant Directors of each zone, and food will be provided by the selected service providers through tender process," the BBMP said. *—Salar News*

Cong ruled States unable to provide jobs: Pralhad Joshi

HUBBALLI, 13 JULY

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has accused Congress-led state governments, particularly in the State, of failing to address high job vacancy rates due to precarious financial conditions.

In response to Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's criticism of the BJP government's employment record, Joshi suggested that Gandhi's remarks are based on superficial feedback from advisers rather than a thorough understanding of the situation. "Gandhi doesn't always go into details. He gives reactions based on the feedback he receives," he stated.

Joshi claimed that the central government is actively working to boost employment, revealing that since 2022, the government has regularly hosted Rozgar Melas, recruiting between 50,000 to 100,000 individuals each month. "In the last two-and-a-half years, over 750,000 people

have been hired into various government departments," he noted.

Joshi pointed out that the State government, by contrast, has failed to fill over 200,000 vacancies, attributing this inaction to its inability to pay current employees on time.

CONG'S HORSE TRADING

With a Congress MLA claiming that the BJP was planning to topple the State government and has prepared a list to target 55 legislators through central agencies, Joshi hit back, alleging that ruling party was "horse trading".

Congress MLA from Hungund Vijayanand Kashappanavar on Saturday claimed that the BJP had a list of 55 Congress MLAs that they would blackmail with ED or CBI raids if they didn't join the saffron party.

Reacting to Kashappanavar's claims, Joshi said, "Has he (Kashappanavar) done anything (wrong) to come on the ED list? Those who have done wrong will come under ED's notice, not others."

He claimed that CM Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar had begun horse trading within the Congress MLAs to garner support.

"Siddaramaiah had recently said that Shivakumar doesn't have the support of many MLAs, so both of them, to garner support on their respective sides, are using their money power. Both of them who are ready to buy MLAs are strong there, so there is no chance for us (BJP) to enter and we don't want to indulge in such things," Joshi said. "It is they who are involved in horse trading." *—PTI*

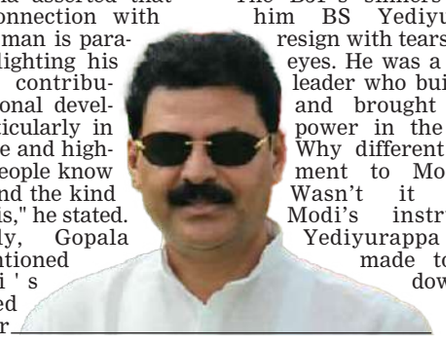
Cong MLA says Gadkari should succeed Modi

SHIVAMOGGA, 13 JULY

State Congress MLA Belur Gopalakrishna has endorsed Union Minister Nitin Gadkari as a fitting successor to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, should Modi choose to step down upon reaching the age of 75. Gopalakrishna's comments follow RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks advocating that leaders retire at 75.

During an event in Nagpur, Bhagwat referenced ideologue Moropant Pingley's assertion regarding the need for senior leaders to step aside. Gopalakrishna asserted that Gadkari's connection with the common man is paramount, highlighting his noteworthy contributions to national development, particularly in infrastructure and highways. "The people know his service and the kind of person he is," he stated.

Additionally, Gopalakrishna mentioned Gadkari's acknowledged concern for



- Following RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks advocating that leaders retire at 75 Gopalakrishna said Gadkari's concern for the impoverished would make him a good PM

the impoverished, remarking on the widening wealth gap in the country. He argued that Gadkari embodies a vision for development, positioning him as a desirable candidate for prime ministership.

"The BJP's sinners made him BS Yediyurappa resign with tears in his eyes. He was a senior leader who built BJP and brought it to power in the state. Why different treatment to Modi ji? Wasn't it under Modi's instruction Yediyurappa was made to step down?" *—PTI*

HALF TRUTHS

Studies misused to justify SO2 rollback: Report

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Before India significantly relaxed sulphur dioxide (SO2) emission control norms exempting a large number of coal-fired power plants, an independent analysis had warned that key scientific studies being cited to justify the move were riddled with contradictions and risked undermining public health.

In an analysis released last month, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) alleged that studies by institutions such as NEERI, NIAS and IIT Delhi were being "selectively used to justify inaction" by power plants across the country, which continue to delay the installation of flue gas desulphurisation (FGD) units to control SO2 emissions – a major air pollutant.

The report said studies by institutions such as NEERI, NIAS and IIT Delhi were being 'selectively used to justify inaction' **PHOTO: PIXABAY**

India established stringent sulphur dioxide emission standards for coal-based power plants in December 2015, requiring compliance within two years.

Even after multiple extensions, 92 per cent of coal-fired power plants have not yet installed flue gas desulphurisation units to control SO2 emissions, a major air pollutant that converts into fine particulate matter and causes a range of diseases.

In a notification dated 11 July, the environment ministry again extended the SO2 compliance deadline for coal-based power plants located within 10km of the National Capital Region or cities with over one million population from December 2024 to December 2027.

The examined plants in critically polluted or non-attainment areas will now be assessed on a case-by-case basis, while those located elsewhere have been fully exempted, provided they meet stack height criteria. *—PTI*

> **The Modi Government has already achieved the dubious distinction of having made India the global leader in sulphur dioxide emissions..... The Ministry claims that sulphur dioxide levels in India are largely within the limits of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). As we have repeatedly pointed out, the NAAQS were last updated in 2009, when the prevailing levels of particulate matter and emissions were of a decidedly lower order**
>
> -Jairam Ramesh, Congress communications head

POLICE TO CONSULT SIT ON DHARMASTHALA MASS BURIALS CASE

MANGALURU, 13 JULY

The Dakshina Kannada Police have stated that they will consult the complainant before deciding whether to replace the current Investigating Officer (IO) or form a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the alleged illegal burial of bodies in Dharmasthala.

In a statement issued on Saturday, 12 July, police noted that some members of the public have demanded either a change in IO or a transfer of investigation to an SIT. Police will also verify with the complainant's legal representatives whether they support such a demand. The statement added that some comments made by complainant's advocates to media on 11 July were factually inaccurate, though no further details were given.

The complainant, who claims to have worked as a

sanitary worker in Dharmasthala between 1995 & 2014, alleged he was forced to bury several victims of murder and sexual assault. On 11 July, he presented skeletal remains—allegedly exhumed by him—to the Belthangady Magistrate Court. Police seized the remains in presence of his advocates and official witnesses.

A report was filed on 3 July, and a case was registered on 4 July under Section 211(a) of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. He has since been granted protection. *—Agencies*

Ex-MLC's aide fires in air as protesters storm T'gana office

HYDERABAD, 13 JULY

A gunman assigned to suspended Congress MLC Teenmaar Mallanna fired into the air on Sunday to disperse protesters from Telangana Jagruthi who stormed his office in Medipally, Telangana. The group, allegedly incensed by Mallanna's remarks against BRS MLC K Kavitha, reportedly vandalised furniture and assaulted staff. Mallanna, present at the scene, claimed the attackers attempted to seize the gunman's weapon and shoot him. He accused Kavitha of instigating a murder attempt and filed a police complaint with video evidence. In response, Kavitha met Legislative Council Chairman Gutha Sukhender Reddy, demanding action over Mallanna's "defamatory" remarks. She criticised the use of gunfire against demonstrators and called for Mallanna's arrest, warning of protests by women if no action is taken. *—PTI*

MP women to get rakhi bonus, aid hike

UJJAIN, 13 JULY

Nearly 1.27 crore women in Madhya Pradesh will receive a Rs 250 Raksha Bandhan gift under the Ladli Behna scheme, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav announced. The monthly assistance will rise from Rs 1,250 to Rs 1,500 starting in October, with a long-term goal of Rs 3,000. Speaking at a state event in Nalwa village, Ujjain, Yadav emphasised the symbolic bond between brothers and sisters, promising the festive gift by 9 August. At the event, he also transferred Rs 1,543 crore to 1.27 crore women as the scheme's 26th instalment. Additionally, he disbursed Rs 46.34 crore in LPG subsidies to over 30 lakh women and Rs 340 crore to nearly 57 lakh pension beneficiaries. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Kerala BJP rejects reports of discontent

T'PURAM, 13 JULY

Kerala BJP chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar on Sunday rejected reports of discontent among some leaders over the recent organisational revamp in the state unit, saying that fresh faces coming into party posts is a natural phenomenon. In the BJP, everyone is equal regardless of status or position, and all leaders are working unitedly as a team with the sole objective of "Viksit Keralam" (Developed Kerala) he told reporters here. He also made it clear that no leader would be left without any responsibility in the party's state unit. The senior leader's remarks came amidst media reports that a section of leaders in the BJP state unit are unhappy over the new changes made as part of the organisational revamp. In view of the upcoming local body polls and assembly elections, a major reshuffle was announced in the BJP state unit, making some significant changes last week. *—PTI*

'Anti-social' elements 'hack' JMM's X handle

RANCHI, 13 JULY

The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's official X handle has been hacked by "anti-social elements", Chief Minister Hemant Soren said on Sunday. Soren is currently in Delhi in connection with his father and JMM founder Shibu Soren's treatment. "JMM's official X handle @JMM Jharkhand has been hacked by anti-social elements," Soren said in a post on the social media platform. "Take cognisance, investigate the matter and take immediate action," the CM said, directing the Jharkhand Police to initiate measures. *—PTI*

EC mulls pan-India voter list revision

Says large number of Nepalese, Bangladeshis found in Bihar's voter list

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Election Commission (EC) has activated its poll machinery across India, signalling a possible nationwide rollout of a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls next month. This follows the ongoing SIR exercise in Bihar, where field-level officials have reported finding "a large number" of foreign nationals from Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar during house-to-house verifications.

The EC has emphasised that names of illegal migrants will not be included in the final voters' list, which is scheduled for publication on September 30. Proper verification of such individuals will be conducted after August 1.

The move gains significance in the wake of heightened scrutiny of illegal migrants across several states. Officials noted that similar exercises may soon be extended nationwide, with the Commission eventually verifying place of birth to identify and exclude foreign nationals from India's electoral rolls.

Bihar, which is headed for Assembly polls this year, is the first state to undergo this SIR *PHOTO: PTI*

Bihar, which is headed for Assembly polls this year, is the first state to undergo this SIR. Other states scheduled for elections in 2026 — Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal — are also on the EC's radar for similar reviews.

The Supreme Court recently upheld the constitutional validity of the SIR process in Bihar, calling it a "constitutional mandate", and allowed the EC to proceed with the exercise. The top court is set to hear the matter again on July 28, after which the EC is expected to take a final call on rolling out the revision nationwide.

Opposition parties had challenged the SIR in court, alleging it could disenfranchise genuine voters. State electoral offices have already begun uploading voters' lists from their last SIRs as reference points. For instance, Delhi has uploaded its 2008 list, while Uttarakhand has posted its 2006 roll. Bihar's 2003 voters' list is being used as the base for its review. *—PTI*

> **The Election Commission has always been a "puppet" in the hands of the Modi government. Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar is an unconstitutional move aimed at ensuring that majoritarian governments remain in power The Commission doesn't have the jurisdiction to decide issues of citizenship**
>
> -Kapil Sibal, Rajya Sabha MP

> **Hum wo sutra [sources] ko mutra samajhte hain... iska koi adhaar nai hai. [We consider these sources as urine, waste). In the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP-led coalition did well. Even last year, NDA bagged 30 out of the state's 40 seats. So, BJP should tell us whether it thinks the alleged infiltrators were voting for Narendra Modi**
>
> -Tejashwi Yadav, RJD leader, when asked about the EC's claims

Patna sees 3rd killing as lawyer shot dead

PATNA, 13 JULLY

A lawyer, Jitendra Mahato (58), was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Patna's Sultanganj area on Sunday, further fuelling concerns over Bihar's worsening law and order situation. He succumbed to his injuries at Patna Medical College and Hospital (PMCH).

Police recovered three bullet shells from the scene and are examining CCTV footage. FSL teams and senior officials have been deployed. SP Patna East, Parichay Kumar, confirmed that Mahato was attacked after visiting his usual tea spot. Preliminary reports suggest he had not practised law for the past two years. This incident follows the recent murders of BJP leader Gopal Khemka and another man in Ram Krishna Nagar. Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary dismissed the idea of organised crime, attributing the murders to personal disputes. *—ANI*

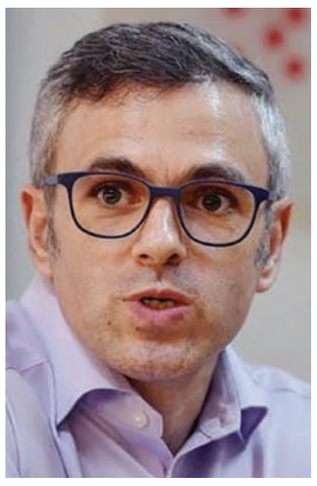
Centre muffling Oppn's voice: Omar amid house arrests

SRINAGAR, 13 JULY

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday decried the alleged house arrest of prominent political leaders in is state as "blatantly undemocratic".

In 1919, hundreds of people protesting peacefully against the Rowlatt Acts, which granted the colonial administration repressive powers, were gunned down by British forces without any provocation at the Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab's Amritsar.

In a post on X, Abdullah said, "In a blatantly undemocratic move, homes have been locked from the outside, police and Central forces deployed as jailers and major bridges in Srinagar blocked. All to stop people from visiting a historically important graveyard containing the graves of people who laid down their lives to give Kashmiris a voice and to empower them. I will never understand what the Law and Order government is so afraid of."



Omar Abdullah *PHOTO: PTI*

The president of Opposition party PDP, Mehbooba Mufti, said the mistrust between Delhi and Kashmiris will truly end only when India accepted Kashmiri "martyrs" as their own.

"The day you accept our heroes as your own just as Kashmiris have embraced yours, from Mahatma Gandhi to Bhagat Singh that day, as Prime Minister Modi once said, the "dil ki doori" (distance of hearts) will truly end," she said in a post on X.

"When you lay siege to the Martyrs' Graveyard, lock people in their homes to prevent them from visiting Mazar-e-Shuhada, it speaks volumes. July 13th commemorates our martyrs those who rose against tyranny, much like countless others across the country. They will always be our heroes," she said. *—PTI*

TVK Chief Vijay led a protest rally in Chennai on Sunday against alleged custodial deaths in Tamil Nadu over the past four years

Vijay protests TN lock-up deaths

CHENNAI, 13 JULY

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) president and actor Vijay on Sunday joined a protest held by his party, demanding justice for Ajith Kumar, who allegedly died in police custody. A large number of TVK members gathered to protest and seek action in the custodial death case.

"Sorry ma," Vijay said as he addressed a large gathering of TVK cadres, slamming Tamil Nadu government. He questioned the state's commitment to justice and law and order, saying, "Law and order should be rectified in the state before this government ends, or else TVK along with the people will make sure it is."

Referring to the Chief Minister MK Stalin's apology to Ajith Kumar's family, Vijay remarked, "Yes, it is not wrong to apologise, but that's not enough. Please also apologize to the families of the 24 others who have died in custody during your government. Have you provided financial aid to them like you did to Ajith Kumar's family?"

He also invoked the Sathankulam custodial torture case that was handed over to the CBI. *—ANI*

After title tweak, Suresh Gopi's 'JSK' set for release

T'PURAM, 13 JULY

The controversy over the denial of censor certification for the Suresh Gopi-starrer "Janaki vs State of Kerala" has been resolved, with the makers agreeing to change the film's title.

It will now be titled "Janaki V vs State of Kerala" (JSK), with the addition of an initial to the name "Janaki".

The original title was rejected by the revising committee of the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC), despite having been cleared by the regional panel, because Janaki is a synonym for Goddess Sita.

Following an appeal filed by the film's producers, High Court judge N Nagaresh agreed to watch the film before passing a verdict.

After the screening, the court asked the producers whether they wished to continue the legal battle.

The producers then agreed to make the changes suggested by the CBFC, as the film's release was being delayed.

In addition to the title change, the film will be released with alterations in eight scenes, and the name "Janaki" will be muted in court sequences.

PHOTO: X

The film's director, Pravin Narayanan, announced on Facebook that the film will release on 17 July.

Narayanan also thanked the film organisations that protested the CBFC's decision to deny certification for what he called "unjustifiable reasons." *—PTI*

TMC zonal president shot dead in WB

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

Trinamool Congress' (TMC) Sirindhipur zonal unit president Pijush Ghosh was shot dead on Sunday in West Bengal's Birbhum district.

He is the second TMC zonal leader and third party worker to be killed in the last three days in the state.

Ghosh, also an office bearer of the local panchayat samity, had left home on his two-wheeler at 12.30am after receiving a phone call. Ghosh had reportedly gone to meet a woman identified as Mousumi Mal.

Mal allegedly saw a man shooting Ghosh from behind around 2am, police sources said. He sustained a bullet injury on his head.

She raised an alarm after Ghosh collapsed on the road. He was rushed to a hospital.

Ghosh was engaged in selling sand from local riverbeds, which allegedly had led to clashes between rival TMC leaders. His wife, Tista Ghosh claimed that politics took his life. *—PTI*

Punjabi gangster among 8 Khalistani suspects held in US

WASHINGTON, 13 JULY

Pavittar Singh Batala, a notorious gangster from Punjab, has been apprehended in the United States alongside seven other Khalistani terrorists in connection with a gang-related kidnapping case. The arrests, made by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), come as Batala appears on India's National Investigation Agency (NIA) most wanted list for alleged involvement in terror activities linked to the banned Babbar Khalsa International (BKI).

The arrests occurred during a coordinated operation on 11 July 2025, involving multiple law enforcement agencies, including the San Joaquin County Sheriff's Office and various SWAT teams. The operation focused on a kidnapping and torture investigation in San Joaquin County.

Those arrested include Dilpreet Singh, Amritpal Singh, Arshpreet Singh, Manpreet Randhawa, Sarabjit Singh, Gurtaj Singh, and an individual identified only as Vishal. They face numerous charges, such as kidnapping, torture, wrongful confinement, and firearm-related offences, and are currently held at San Joaquin County Jail. Authorities seized a cache of weapons during the operation, including six firearms—one being a fully automatic Glock—along with hundreds of rounds of ammunition, high-capacity magazines, and over $15,000 in cash. This operation is part of the FBI's Summer Heat initiative, aimed at tackling violent offenders and restoring safety in American communities. In recent years, several Indian gangsters, including Goldy Brar and Anmol Bishnoi, have made the US and Canada their refuge to evade legal consequences in India while continuing their criminal enterprises abroad. *—Agencies*

Those arrested include Dilpreet Singh, Amritpal Singh, Arshpreet Singh, Manpreet Randhawa, Sarabjit Singh & Gurtaj Singh *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

'Raj-Uddhav tie-up must for new M'rashtra'

MUMBAI, 13 JULY

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut on Sunday said a political alliance between Uddhav Thackeray and his cousin Raj Thackeray is essential to give Maharashtra a "new direction". Writing in his weekly column Rok Thok in Saamana, Raut claimed the BJP has no real concern for Maharashtra's unity or Marathi asmita (pride).

Raut warned that without unity between the Thackeray cousins, Mumbai could be overtaken by corporates like "Adani-Lodha" and risk losing its identity as part of Maharashtra.Speculation around a Raj-Uddhav rapprochement began in April, with both leaders hinting at moving past "trivial" differences. On July 5, the cousins shared a political stage for the first time in nearly two decades, united against the imposition of Hindi in schools—a move that Raut claimed gave hope to the Marathi manoos. *—PTI*

LOST LEGS IN 1994 ATTACK

BJP's RS nominee had communist roots

KANNUR, 13 JULY

Senior BJP leader C Sadanandan Master, who was nominated to the Rajya Sabha, on Sunday said the party high command's decisions and his new responsibility are aimed at realising its core objective of "Viksit Keralam" (Developed Kerala).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi indicated the new position during an interaction and he learned of the nomination this morning.

He is a senior BJP leader from the politically volatile Kannur district4.

Sadanandan came under attack from CPM workers at Mattanur in Kannur on 25 January, 1994 at the age of 30.

The hardcore RSS worker was brutally attacked and both his legs were chopped.

Since then he has been living with artificial limps. Though he was born in a communist family in Kannur, Sadanandan found himself gravitating towards RSS ideologies.

A school teacher, Sadanandan Master has been actively engaged in various party programmes and roles for several years *PHOTO: PTI*

A school teacher, Master has been actively engaged in various party programmes and roles for several years.

He said the BJP in Kerala is at a critical juncture as the local body and Assembly elections are around the corner.

The party leadership conveyed a message, emphasising 'Viksit Kerakam' as its core objective.

He further said the PM is paying much attention to implementing several programmes to achieve the target of "Viksit Kerakam".

Master also said that service would be his top priority as a Rajya Sabha MP.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed Master's contributions and described him as an "epitome of courage".

"Shri C Sadanandan Master's life is the epitome of courage and refusal to bow to injustice. Violence and intimidation couldn't deter his spirit....," the he said on X.

Former foreign secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla, special public prosecutor in the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks case, Ujjwal Nikam and historian Meenakshi Jain were also nominated to the Rajya Sabha. *—PTI*

Asia's tallest Murugan statue to come in Erode

TN is set to get Asia's tallest Murugan statue at the Thindal Murugan temple in Erode. Here is all you need to know about it:

LOCATION: Velayuthasamy temple in Thindal, located 7km from Erode.

The govt is also planning an 184-foot-tall one at Marudhamalai in Coimbatore.

Cost: Rs 30 crore.

Height: 186 feet tall.

At 146 feet, Lord Muruga statue in Salem is currently the world's tallest.

PHOTO: PTI

Mizoram gets railway connection after 26-yr wait

AIZAWL, 13 JULY

The long-awaited Bairabi-Sairang railway line has finally connected Mizoram's capital to the national railway network after overcoming significant challenges since its initial conception in September 1999. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the 51.38km line. Construction commenced in earnest in 2015-16 despite difficult terrain and monsoon-related delays. The working season is restricted to just four to five months annually due to heavy rainfall, which complicated material transport and labour availability. The line features 48 tunnels stretching 12.853km, along with numerous bridges, including one towering at 104 metres, higher than the Qutub Minar. Its completion marks a significant milestone.—*PTI*

UNESCO tag for M'laya living root bridges soon?

SHILLONG, 13 JULY

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has voiced her strong support for Meghalaya's bid to obtain UNESCO World Heritage status for its unique living root bridges. During a visit to a root bridge in Siej village, she commended the community's push for the proposal, emphasising the importance of global recognition for indigenous ecological practices. The living root bridges, crafted over generations by local Khasi and Jaintia communities, represent a remarkable blend of nature and human ingenuity. Following a failed initial proposal in 2018, Sitharaman's engagement with villagers underscored the necessity of grassroots involvement in preserving traditional knowledge. She visited border village Sohbar, prioritising local development, infrastructure and financial services.—*PTI*

Raja Raghuvanshi murder: 2 accused get bail

SHILLONG, 13 JULY

A local court has granted bail to Lokendra Singh Tomar and Balbir Ahirwar, two co-accused in the murder of businessman Raja Raghuvanshi, who was killed in May. Tomar, the owner of the flat in Indore, where the victim's wife Sonam stayed after fleeing from Meghalaya, and Ahirwar, a security guard, were released as they had fully cooperated with investigators and faced bailable charges. They were charged with obstructing justice and tampering with evidence. Raja Raghuvanshi went missing on 23 May during a honeymoon in Meghalaya, with his body being discovered weeks later. Sonam, along with her alleged boyfriend Raj Kushwaha and three hired hitmen, accused of orchestrating the murder plot, are in custody.—*PTI* .

2 groups clash in R'than; 7 detained

JAIPUR, 13 JULY

Tensions flared in Ramganj area in Rajasthan's after a clash broke out between two groups following a minor dispute, leading to the detention of seven individuals. The confrontation occurred late Saturday night in the Paharganj locality, with reports of stone-pelting prompting a rapid police response. Fortunately, no serious injuries were reported. Deputy Commissioner of Police Rashi Dogra confirmed that the police had restored order within minutes. Following the incident, police are maintaining a heightened presence in the area to prevent further unrest and have urged locals to avoid spreading rumours that could incite further tensions. The situation was reported to be calm on Sunday morning as patrols continued.—*PTI*

No rape, she fell off auto: Dad of girl raped in IIM

NCW says family pressure preventing family from speaking

KOLKATA, 13 JULY

The alleged rape case of a woman by a student of the Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta inside a hostel on the campus has taken a new turn, with her father claiming that the reported incident did not take place.

The accused student was arrested on Saturday on the basis of an FIR lodged by the woman, a police officer had said.

However, the woman's father told reporters later on Saturday that his daughter met with an accident and suffered injuries.

"I received a call from my daughter around 9.40 pm on Friday. She told me she had fallen from a vehicle, lost consciousness and suffered injuries. Later, I came to know she was admitted to SSKM Hospital. Nothing of the sort that the police are claiming happened, based on the details I received from my daughter," he said.

According to police, the woman stated in the FIR that she was called to the hostel for a counselling session.

"She then became unconscious after consuming a drink laced with drugs at the hostel. The woman realised she had been raped after regaining consciousness," the officer had said.

Meanwhile, a court here on Saturday remanded the accused student to police custody till July 19.

The additional chief judicial magistrate at Alipore court, after hearing both parties, granted police remand of the accused.

Meanwhile, the State Women's Commission has taken suo motu cognisance of the incident. Chairperson Leena Gangopadhyay said it is in touch with the police over visiting the woman and her family.

"We want the truth to come out. If any social stigma or family pressure is preventing her family from speaking freely, that must be addressed. We are closely monitoring the developments," Gangopadhyay said. —*PTI*

The police are investigating the allegations of rape by a woman on the IIM-Calcutta campus PHOTO: PTI

PLEA FOR HELP WENT UNNOTICED

NCW seeks report, says HoD harassed Odisha girl

BHUBANESWAR, 13 JULY

Taking suo motu cognisance over a college student resorting to self-immolation over an alleged sexual harassment incident in Odisha's Balasore, the National Commission for Women Sunday asked the DGP to take strict action against the culprits.

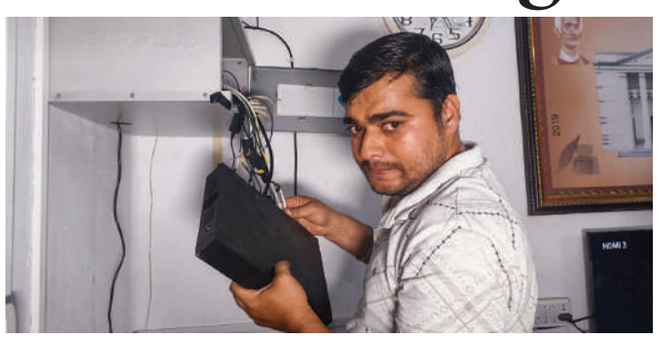
The commission said that a 20-year-old woman student of a government college in Balasore allegedly self herself ablaze after facing sexual harassment and academic threats by the head of the department of Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College.

"An action taken report must be submitted to the Commission within three days," the NCW said.

NCW Chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar has asked the Odisha DGP to "ensure a fair and time-bound" investigation. Terming the self-immolation as "shocking and deeply distressing", Leader of Opposition in Odisha Assembly Naveen Patnaik sought Governor's intervention to ensure justice to the victim.

Patnaik said she was allegedly subjected to relentless sexual harassment by a teacher who repeatedly demanded sexual favours. In a letter to the principal, she revealed that she had earlier attempted suicide but was saved, the former chief minister said.

Patnaik said that this incident lays bare how she was denied justice. —*PTI*



A police officer seizes a surveillance hard disk from Fakir Mohan (Autonomous) College after a female student self-immolated PHOTO: PTI

Families oppose marriage; couple dies by suicide

MIRZAPUR, 13 JULY

A young couple allegedly took their own lives by jumping in front of a train after their families opposed their desire to marry. The incident occurred near Chaderu Chowktha village in Mirzapur of Uttar Pradesh around midnight on Friday.

According to police reports, the victims, identified as 21-year-old Shivam Sonkar and 20-year-old Anjali Dharikar, both residents of Prayagraj district, had been in a relationship and sought to marry against their families' wishes.

Emergency services from Jigana police station responded promptly to the scene. After a post-mortem examination the bodies were returned to their families.

The tragic incident highlights the ongoing issues surrounding familial pressures and the emotional struggles faced by young couples in the present society. —*PTI*

SC hears Kerala nurse on death row case

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Supreme Court of India will hear a plea on Monday, 15 July, seeking urgent diplomatic intervention to save Nimisha Priya, a 38-year-old nurse from Kerala, facing execution in Yemen on 16 July for murder.

A bench will hear the matter, which was mentioned urgently on 10 July by advocate Subhash Chandran KR. He urged the Court to direct the government to explore diplomatic channels, including the option of paying blood money—compensation permitted under Sharia law—which may lead to a pardon from the victim's family.

Nimisha Priya PHOTO: X

Nimisha Priya, from Palakkad district, was convicted in 2020 for the 2017 murder of her Yemeni business partner and has been held in a prison in Sana'a. Her final appeal was rejected in 2023.

The petitioner, Save Nimisha Priya International Action Council, cited media reports suggesting Yemeni authorities have tentatively scheduled her execution for 16 July.

The Court asked the petitioner to serve a copy to the Attorney General and sought his assistance, given the urgency of the matter and the potential for diplomatic resolution under Yemeni legal provisions. —*PTI*

SC to hear on ED summonning lawyer

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Supreme Court will hear a suo motu case on Monday regarding probe agencies summoning lawyers who advise or represent clients. This follows ED notices to senior advocates Arvind Datar and Pratap Venugopal. The ED has since barred such summons without director-level approval. Legal bodies condemned the trend as a threat to judicial independence. SC seeks legal officer's views. —*PTI*

HC hears QR code order for eateries

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Supreme Court will hear a plea on 15 July challenging the Uttar Pradesh government's directive requiring all eateries along the Kanwar Yatra route to display QR codes revealing owners' identities. The PIL, filed by academic Apoorvanand Jha and others, argues the move violates privacy and enables discriminatory profiling, previously stayed by the court in similar cases. It compels one reveal his religion. —*PTI*

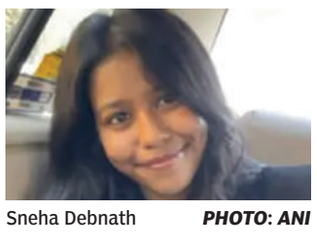
Tripura student goes missing in Delhi

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

A 19-year-old student from Tripura, Sneha Debnath, has been reported missing in Delhi since Monday, sparking concern among her family and authorities. Sneha, a pupil at Atma Ram Sanatana Dharma College, last spoke with her family on 7 July, informing them she had beenheading to Sarai Rohilla Railway Station with a friend named Pitunia. Soon her phone was switched off.

Sneha had reportedly not made any bank transactions in the past four months, raising questions about her survival in Delhi. A cab driver later confirmed he dropped her near Signature Bridge, a location notorious for safety issues and lack of CCTV coverage.

A search operation on was conducted on 9 July within a 7-kilometre radius of her last known location, but they have found no leads. Tripura's Chief Minister Manik Saha urged anyone with information to come forward. The matter is being investigated by the police. —*Agencies*



Sneha Debnath PHOTO: ANI

- Sneha had reportedly not made any bank transactions in the past four months, raising questions about her survival in Delhi.

MATTER OF FAITH

Odisha to copyright Jagannath temple rites

BHUBANESWAR, 13 JULY

The Odisha government started working on securing copyright for the rituals of Lord Jagannath temple in Puri to protect its traditional cultural expressions, Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, the titular king of the pilgrim town, said.

The statement came amid resentments among the devotees of Lord Jagannath over the untimely celebration of Lord Jagannath's rituals by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) abroad and the West Bengal government's declaration of a temple in Digha as 'Jagannath Dham'.

These are "gross violations" of sacred scriptures and ancient tradition, the Gajapati Maharaja, considered the first servitor of the Lord Jagannath said.

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated a temple in Digha, calling it 'Jagannath Dham'. ISKCON performs the rituals and puja of the sibling deities – Lord Jagannath, Lord Baladev and Devi Subhadra.

The Shankaracharya of Gobardhan Peeth Puri, the Shankaracharya of Joshi Math, Badrinath, and Mukti Mandap Pandit Sabha (the apex religious body in Puri) called it a breach of tradition.

ISKCON faced criticism recently for holding the Rath Yatra festival in foreign countries on dates different from those traditionally observed in Puri.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi wrote to Banerjee requesting her to reconsider the name for the Digha temple.

Deb said the state administration has started work on copyrighting rituals related to the 12th-century shrine in Puri to stop recurrence of such incidents. —*PTI*

Gajapati Maharaja Dibyasingha Deb, claimed that there were gross violations of sacred scriptures and ancient tradition PHOTO: PTI

THE TROUBLING TRACK RECORD OF 'UDAIPUR FILES' PRODUCER

As the release date of 'Udaipur Files' gets closer, calls to boycott the movie and appeals to stay its release grow louder. Incidentally, the film producer, Amit Jani, is a controversial figure to say the least. Here is all you need to know about him.

WHO IS HE?

- The 44-year-old resident of Meerut in UP.
- Known Hindutva leader.
- Former Samajwadi Party member.
- Founded Uttar Pradesh Navnirman Sena (UPNS) – A radical Right-wing outfit, apparently based on the ideologies of Raj Thackeray's MNS.
- As per his close associates the 36-year-old Jani has been in and out of jail since he was a teenager.

Why Jani first made headlines in 2012

- He vandalised former UP CM Mayawati's statue.
- Arrested for showing black flag to Congress' Rahul Gandhi.

Jani's alleged anti-Muslim rhetoric from 2016

- Threatened JNU's Umar Khalid and Kanhaiya Kumar.
- He put up "leave or face consequences" hoardings in Delhi, addressing Kashmiris.
- He also called for SP leader Azam Khan's tongue to be cut off.

Mission saffronisation

- He shared modified image of Taj Mahal with saffron flags.
- Put "Kashmiris not allowed" sign at his hotel after Pulwama attack.

Alleged murderer gets LS ticket

- UPNS gave Lok Sabha ticket to Shambhulal Regar in 2019.
- Regar was accused of killing a Muslim migrant labourer in 2017.
- The murderer took video of himself killing the victim, just like in Udaipur case.
- Besides, Jani has also fielded Hariom Sisodia, one of the accused in the lynching of Mohammad Akhlaq in September 2015, and Naresh Kumar Sehrawat, accused of stabbing 16-year-old Junaid Khan in June 2017.

Does 'Udaipur Files' vilify Muslims?

The 'Udaipur Files' is a film based on the 2022 murder of tailor Kanhaiya Lal, who was beheaded in Udaipur after allegedly supporting a social media post against Prophet Mohammed. The film, scheduled for release on 11 July, was stayed by the Delhi HC following objections from Muslim groups and the Opposition, who argue it promotes hate speech and vilifies the Muslims. Critics claim the movie goes beyond the actual incident, portraying Muslims negatively and linking them to unrelated communal events such as the Delhi riots. Scenes reportedly include Muslims desecrating Hindu spaces and students being arrested.

Credit Graphics : Amina

FINANCIAL FRAUD

Spl PMLA courts to expedite money laundering trials

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) announced on Sunday that the recent notification of additional special courts under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) will significantly speed up trials in financial crime cases.

In a statement, the agency said Telangana now has 16 special courts, including two in Visakhapatnam, while Rajasthan has increased its count from one (in Jaipur) to five, with a new court in Jodhpur. Goa, which previously had just one court for the entire state, now has an exclusive special PMLA court in North Goa.

These special courts have been notified in states where the existing number of judicial forums was deemed "inadequate", often causing prolonged delays in proceedings, the ED said.

"With the addition of these special courts, the Directorate will be able to significantly accelerate trial proceedings in PMLA cases," it stated. "This initiative is also expected to address concerns raised by constitutional courts regarding delays in money laundering trials." —*PTI*

PATTACHITRA ART

Tablewares adorned with Pattachitra designs on display, at Naya village, in Paschim Medinipur district, West Bengal. Pattachitra is a scroll painting tradition where artists sing as they unroll their painted stories. Despite its global reach and popularity in India, the pattachitra continues to thrive in a small village of 136 families facing challenges of funding, technology, and support ***PHOTO: PTI***

Time for feasts & farewells for Shukla, Ax-4 astronauts

After 18 days of intense science experiments at the International Space Station, it is time for farewells and feasts for Shubhanshu Shukla and three other astronauts of the Axiom-4 mission who are set to begin their return journey to Earth on Monday.

The Axiom 4 (Ax-4) crew—Commander Peggy Whitson, Pilot Shubhanshu "Shux" Shukla, and Mission Specialists Slawosz "Suave" Uznanski-Wisniewski and Tibor Kapu—are nearing the completion of their research and preparing to undock at 4.35pm IST on Monday.

"Arrival back to earth.... splash down scheduled for 15 July, at 3.00pm IST," Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said in a post on X.

A formal farewell for the Axiom-4 crew is scheduled for Sunday evening, India time.

As the Axiom-4 mission drew to a close, astronauts on board the ISS gathered for a feast with a diverse menu from the six nations they represent.

Currently, there are 11 astronauts on the ISS, seven of Expedition 73 and four of the Axiom-4 commercial mission.

"One of the most unforgettable evenings I've experienced on this mission was sharing a meal with new friends, Ax-4, aboard the International @ Space_Station," US astronaut Jonny Kim said in a post on X last week.

"We swapped stories and marvelled at how people from diverse backgrounds and nations came together to represent humanity in space," he said.

For appetisers, the astronauts made rehydrated shrimp cocktails and crackers and the main course featured savoury chicken and beef fajitas. The cosmonauts capped the night with a delicious cake made from sweet bread, condensed milk, and walnuts, Kim said.

Shukla had got aam ras and carrot halwa for the feast, while Polish astronaut Slawosz had brought his native dish, pierogi with cabbage and mushrooms, to the ISS.

So far, Shubhanshu Shukla has spent 18 days in space, witnessing 16 sunrises and sunsets every day as the ISS travels at a speed of 28,000km per hour in an orbit about 400km above the Earth ***PHOTO: PTI***

It has been a historic trip for Shukla, who became the first Indian to travel to the ISS and only the second to travel to space after Rakesh Sharma's pathbreaking spaceflight as part of the then Soviet Russia's mission to Salyut-7 space station in 1984.

So far, Shukla has spent 18 days in space, witnessing 16 sunrises and sunsets every day as the ISS travels at a speed of 28,000km per hour in an orbit about 400km above the Earth.

According to ISRO, post splashdown, Shukla will undergo a rehabilitation programme under the supervision of a flight surgeon to adapt back to Earth's gravity.

ISRO paid approximately Rs 550 crore for Shukla's travel to the ISS, an experience that will help the space agency in the planning and execution of its human spaceflight programme, Gaganyaan, set to take to orbit in 2027.

Shukla and the three other astronauts are expected to board the spacecraft at 2.25pm IST, wear their space suits and carry out the necessary tests before they begin their journey to the Earth.

The ISS is orbiting the Earth at a speed of 28,000km per hour, and the Dragon spacecraft will initiate the autonomous undocking process to gradually slow down and re-enter the planet's atmosphere for a splashdown off the coast of California.

During his stay at the ISS, Shukla worked on the microalgae experiment, deploying and stowing samples that could one day provide food, oxygen and biofuels for deep-space missions, Axiom Space said in a statement.

The resilience of the microalgae makes them a promising asset to sustain life beyond Earth, it added.

"Exercise research and spacesuit maintenance topped the schedule for the Expedition 73 and Axiom Mission 4 (Ax-4) crews on Thursday," the NASA statement said.

The crew also continued the Voyager Displays study, which examines how spaceflight affects eye movement and coordination.

The crew collected data for a study to explore how astronauts perceive and interact with their environment in orbit, which is critical for designing mentally supportive habitats for long-duration missions.

Another study focused on cerebral blood flow, investigating how microgravity and elevated carbon dioxide levels affect cardiovascular function, which could later benefit both astronauts and patients on Earth. *—PTI*

SALAR سالار

ICMR says Indians are consuming too much salt

Excessive salt consumption is fuelling a silent epidemic in India with people at increased risk of hypertension, stroke, heart disease, and kidney disorders, according to scientists from ICMR's National Institute of Epidemiology.

The scientists have initiated a community-led salt reduction study to address the issue and are focusing on low sodium salt substitutes.

While the World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends less than 5g of salt per person per day, studies show that urban Indians consume around 9.2g/day, and even in rural areas it is around 5.6g/day - both higher than recommended.

One promising tool in this effort is low-sodium salt substitutes -- blends where part of the sodium chloride is replaced with potassium or magnesium salts, Dr Sharan Murali, a senior scientist at National Institute of Epidemiology (NIE) and principal investigator of the study, said.

"Lesser sodium consumption helps reduce blood pressure and improves overall heart health, making low-sodium alternatives a meaningful switch, especially for those with hypertension," Murali stated.

"Just switching to low-sodium salt can lower blood pressure by 7/4mmHg on average is a small change with a big impact," Murali said.

To tackle the issue of high salt consumption, the NIE has launched a three-year intervention project in Punjab and Telangana, supported by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

The goal is to evaluate the effectiveness of structured salt reduction counselling, delivered by health workers at Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs), in reducing blood pressure and sodium intake among individuals with hypertension, senior scientist at NIE, Ganesh Kumar, who is also a part of the study, said.

"We are currently in the first year of the project, focused on baseline assessments and field preparations," Kumar said.

"Counselling materials are not yet finalised; rather, we aim to co-create the intervention package with the community health workers, drawing on their experiences and incorporating their suggestions. It's not just about delivering health education - it's about listening, understanding, and building together," Murali said.

To ensure interventions are grounded in reality, the NIE conducted a market survey across 300 retail outlets in Chennai to assess the availability and pricing of low-sodium salt (LSS).

They found that LSS was available in only 28 per cent of retail outlets. It was seen in 52 per cent of supermarkets, but a dismal 4 per cent in small grocery shops.

The price of LSS averaged Rs 5.6 per 100g, more than twice the price of normal iodised salt (Rs 2.7 per 100g).

These findings highlight a critical supply-demand disconnect, Murali said.

"The lower demand for low sodium salt might be leading to its lower availability - it's a proxy indicator of awareness and access," noted Murali.

To spark a public conversation around salt reduction, the NIE has also recently launched the #PinchForAChange campaign on Twitter and LinkedIn through ICMR-NIE.

Using infographics, facts, and simple messages, the campaign aims to raise awareness about hidden salt sources, promote low-sodium alternatives, and empower individuals to make heart-healthy choices.

"If successful, this project could lead to the integration of sustainable dietary counselling models into the existing public health system. It can bridge the gap between knowledge and action, improve health literacy, and ultimately reduce the burden of hypertension-related diseases."

"This is not just about reducing salt. It's about restoring balance in our diets, our systems, and our hearts. Together, one pinch at a time, we can create lasting change," Murali added. *—PTI*

The price of LSS averaged Rs 5.6 per 100g, more than twice the price of normal iodised salt ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

A long walk ahead for rural children as UP begins pairing schools

In the ongoing 2025-26 session, the enrolment figure hovers around just 1 crore ***PHOTO: PTI***

For eight-year-old Amit, a Class 2 student at a government primary school in Kakori block on the outskirts of Lucknow, mornings meant a short sprint to school. It was just 200 metres away from home.

This morning schedule is now set to change, courtesy to Uttar Pradesh government's recent decision to pair schools. Amit's school, like many others, are set to be merged with another school in a neighbouring village two kilometres away. That's a bit far for a dash, Amit admits.

"Now my father will have to take me to school on his bicycle. The problem is that he is not always free," he says.

A sweeping initiative was undertaken by the state government to "pair" schools with low enrolment, aimed at pooling resources, improving infrastructure, and aligning with the goals of the National Education Policy 2020.

The policy, recently upheld by the Allahabad High Court, has set in motion the pairing of over 10,000 of the 1.3 lakh government-run primary schools across the state, officials estimate.

The essence of the pairing exercise lies in merging schools with fewer than 50 students into nearby institutions to create a more robust learning environment.

"The core idea is to consolidate teaching staff, infrastructure and other educational resources," Deepak Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary of Basic Education, told PTI. "This includes better use of school buildings, smart class technology and materials. It is about creating a richer, more effective academic space for children."

States like Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat have already undertaken similar reforms, and Uttar Pradesh officials say they are following proven models.

Kumar calls the exercise "a transformative structural reform" aimed at revitalising a scattered rural education network.

The move comes amidst a drop in enrolment numbers in government primary and upper primary schools across the state since the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2022-23, enrolments in schools under the Basic Shiksha Parishad reached an all-time high of 1.92 crore. However, this figure dropped to 1.68 crore in 2023-24 and fell further to 1.48 crore in 2024-25.

In the ongoing 2025-26 session, the enrolment figure hovers around just 1 crore.

According to education department officials, in schools where the level of enrolment and attendance are less, there are high chances that students might drop out in the middle of an academic session or when the session ends.

With the pairing exercise, the number of students in a classroom will increase.

In a recent judgment, the Allahabad High Court dismissed multiple writ petitions that challenged the government orders dated 16 and 24 June, 2025.

- The move comes amidst a drop in enrolment numbers in government primary and upper primary schools across the state since the Covid-19 pandemic.

The petitioners had claimed that the pairing would make children walk more than a kilometre to school, in alleged violation of the Article 21A of the Constitution and the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE), 2009.

However, the court noted that the RTE Act allows flexibility in implementing "neighbourhood schools" and found no evidence of state failure. It ruled that the students' constitutional and legal rights remained intact.

Despite the policy's judicial approval, the response on the ground is far from unanimous.

"My children's school used to be a five-minute walk. With this merger, they may now have to cross fields and take two buses," said Ritu Devi, a mother of two and a daily wager in rural Sitapur. "Who will ensure their safety? Who will drop them to school and bring them back every day?"

Suresh Singh, a farmer, worry about what lies ahead.

However, some express hope.

Teachers too are wary. In rural areas, enrolment often depends on the teachers' personal outreach. A teacher in Sitapur echoed the concern. Dissent is brewing within the teaching community as well.

Dinesh Chandra Sharma, an office-bearer of the Uttar Pradesh Primary Teachers' Association, called the move "a disguised closure of government schools."

The association fears that the policy will lead to large-scale teacher transfers or even job cuts.

The initiative has also drawn sharp criticism from major opposition parties, including the Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party, Indian National Congress, and the Aam Aadmi Party.

Samajwadi Party President Akhilesh Yadav has labelled the policy a "deep-rooted conspiracy" to deprive future generations, particularly from backward, Dalit and minority communities (PDA), of their right to education. He alleged that the BJP government is deliberately weakening public education to foster an "uneducated, superstitious and unscientific" populace.

A provocative poster outside the Samajwadi Party headquarters echoed this sentiment: "What kind of Ram Rajya is this? Close the schools. Open the liquor shops."

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati has branded the move "unjust, unnecessary and anti-poor" stating it undermines accessible government education to millions. She warned of increased dropout rates, especially for girls, due to longer travel distances, and vowed to reverse the policy if the BSP returns to power.

State Congress Chief Ajay Rai has written to the Governor demanding an immediate halt, asserting that the mergers are a disguised attempt to close schools, harming rural and economically weaker students.

Aam Aadmi Party's (AAP) Rajya Sabha MP and state in-charge Sanjay Singh has launched a "Save School" campaign, accusing the government of planning to close numerous schools while opening liquor stores.

Meanwhile, officials remain optimistic, stressing that once the initial discomfort subsides, students will benefit from better facilities, larger peer groups, and more dynamic learning.

But for families like Amit's, the policy is less about reform and more about everyday reality. *—PTI*

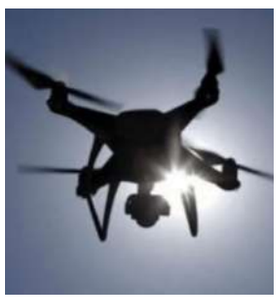


PHOTO: X

Drone hits Pak police station fifth time in a month

PESHAWAR, 13 JULY

A police station in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province was the target of a drone attack on Saturday, marking the fifth such incident at the same location within a month. Armed terrorists deployed a quadcopter to drop ammunition on the Miryan police station in Bannu, although no injuries or structural damage was reported. Officials stated that attempts to intercept the drone were unsuccessful. Security has been heightened in the area as police continue their search for suspects. Additionally, a separate shooting assault occurred at the Serai Gambila police station, where police successfully repelled armed militants. The military has linked the rise in drone attacks to the activities of the proscribed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, raising security concerns in the region. *—PTI*

PTI launches 'Free Imran Khan Movement'

LAHORE, 13 JULY

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), led by prominent leaders including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, has informally initiated a 'Free Imran Khan movement' in Lahore to demand the release of former prime minister Imran Khan, currently imprisoned. This comes ahead of the PTI's planned nationwide protest scheduled for 5 August. Despite police efforts resulting in the arrest of at least 20 PTI workers attempting to gather in Lahore, Gandapur and party leaders pledged to escalate protest activities. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Three killed in Turkey's Ankara apartment fire

ANKARA, 13 JULY

A fire in a 26-storey apartment building in Ankara resulted in the deaths of three individuals, including a three-and-a-half-month-old baby, reports reveal. The fire erupted shortly after 10pm on Saturday and rapidly spread from the fourth floor. Firefighters battled the blaze for four hours before bringing it under control. In addition to the fatalities, 39 people suffered minor smoke inhalation injuries, and 26 individuals were treated on-site, while 20 others were hospitalised, with one listed in critical condition. Authorities are investigating the cause of the fire amidst concerns over building safety standards. *—PTI*

Austria shooter kills man, wounds woman

VIENNA, 13 JULY

Police in Austria said a man was fatally shot and a woman seriously wounded on Sunday morning by an assailant who took his own life. The shooting happened in the town of Traiskirchen, 32kms south of Vienna. Austria News Agency quoted local police spokesman Johann Baumschlager as saying that the suspect fled in a vehicle and later took his own life. The woman was flown to a hospital in Vienna. The Lower Austrian State Office of Criminal Investigation is investigating the shooting but could not immediately give any further details. Local media reported that the shooting was preceded by an argument between the three people. *—PTI*

EU delays tariffs on US, hopes for a deal

EU is US' biggest trading partner & largest trading bloc

BEIJING, 13 JULY

The EU will suspend retaliatory tariffs on US goods scheduled to take effect Monday in hopes of reaching a trade deal with the Trump administration by the end of the month.

"This is now the time for negotiations," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen told reporters in Brussels on Sunday, after US President Donald Trump sent a letter announcing new tariffs of 30 per cent on goods from the EU and Mexico starting 1 August.

The EU — America's biggest trading partner and the world's largest trading bloc — had been scheduled to impose "countermeasures" starting Monday at midnight Brussels time. The EU negotiates trade deals on behalf of its 27-member countries.

Von der Leyen said those countermeasures would be delayed until 1 August, and that Trump's letter shows "that we have until the first of August" to negotiate. European leaders have urged Trump and von der Leyen to give negotiations more time.

"We have always been clear that we prefer a negotiated solution," she said. If they can't reach a deal, she said that "we will continue to prepare countermeasures so we are fully prepared".

Standing alongside Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto, von der Leyen said the trade tensions with the US show the importance of "diversifying our trade relationships".

Trump has said his global tariffs would set the foundation for reviving a US economy that he claims has been ripped off by other nations for decades. Trump in his letter to the European Union said the US trade deficit was a national security threat.

US trade partners have faced months of uncertainty and on-and-off threats from Trump to impose tariffs, with deadlines sometimes extended or changed. The tariffs could have ramifications for nearly every aspect of the global economy.

The value of EU-US trade in goods and services amounted to 1.7 trillion euros ($2 trillion) in 2024, or an average of 4.6 billion euros a day, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat.

Europe's biggest exports to the US were pharmaceuticals, cars, aircraft, chemicals, medical instruments and wine and spirits. . *—PTI*

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto **PHOTO: X@VONDERLEYEN**

US fires people involved in Trump prosecutions

The Justice Department has fired additional lawyers and support staff who worked on special counsel Jack Smith's prosecutions of President Donald Trump, according to two Associated Press sources. The number of terminations was not immediately clear but they breached election interference prosecutions brought by Smith.

USAID cuts HIV vaccine research in South Africa

Just a week before South African scientist were to begin clinical trials of an HIV vaccine to limit one of history' deadliest pandemics, the US withdrew funding from the project. The news devastated the researchers, who live and work in a region where more people live with HIV than anywhere else in the world.

Trump defends Bondi in Epstein sex files case

Trump defended US Attorney General Pam Bondi from heated backlash over her handling of documents related to alleged sex trafficker Jeffery Epstein. Bondi had earlier said that Epstein's client list was sitting on her desk, only for the Department of Justice to later say that there was no client list.

'World's poorest' lobbying against Trump

Some of the world's poorest countries have started paying millions to lobbyists linked to Trump to try to offset US cuts to foreign aid, an investigation said. Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and Haiti are among 11 countries, with many bartering key resources including minerals in exchange for humanitarian or military support.

TRADE PACTS ON CARDS

Australian PM on China visit

BEIJING, 13 JULY

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese kicked off a visit to China this weekend meant to shore up trade relations between the two countries.

Albanese met with Shanghai Party Secretary Chen Jining on Sunday, the first in a series of high-level exchanges that will include meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Qiang and Chairman Zhao Leji of the National People's Congress.

Albanese is leading "a very large business delegation" to China, which speaks to the importance of the economic relations between Australia and China, he told Chinese state broadcaster CGTN upon his arrival in Shanghai Saturday.

During a weeklong trip, Albanese is set to meet business, tourism and sport representatives in Shanghai and Chengdu including a CEO roundtable Tuesday in Beijing, his office said.

It is Albanese's second visit to China since his centre-left Labor Party government was first elected in 2022.

The party was re-elected in May. "My government has worked very hard to diversify trade … and to increase our relationships with other countries in the region, including India and Indonesia and the ASEAN countries," he said. *—PTI*

A PIECE OF MARS

The largest piece of Mars found on Earth is going to be auctioned in New York. The 25kg rock is estimated to fetch a price between USD 2–4 million during Wednesday's sale. According to the auction house, the meteorite is believed to have been blown off the surface of Mars by a massive asteroid strike before travelling 140 million miles to Earth, where it crashed into the Sahara. A meteorite hunter found it in Niger in November 2023 **PHOTO: X**

Israeli strikes kill at least 160 in Gaza Strip in two days

TEL AVIV, 13 JULY

At least 160 Palestinians, including children and women, were killed and dozens of others injured since dawn on Saturday as a result of Israeli airstrikes on the Gaza Strip.

Gaza's Civil Defence agency said Israeli air strikes have killed at least 50 Palestinians on Sunday, including 10 near a water distribution point. On Saturday, 110 Palestinians were killed across the Strip, including 34 people waiting for food at the US-backed GHF site in Rafah.

The Red Cross said its field hospital saw its largest influx of dead in more than a year of operation after the shootings, and that the overwhelming majority of the more than 100 people hurt had gunshot wounds.

Airstrikes in central Gaza's Deir al-Balah killed 13 including the four children, officials at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital said. Fifteen others were killed in Khan Younis in the south, according to Nasser Hospital. Israel's military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. —

Mourners attend the funeral of their relatives who were killed in an Israeli bombardment, in al-Balah, Gaza **PHOTO: PTI**

70 HELD AT UK PROTESTS IN SUPPORT OF BANNED GROUP PALESTINE ACTION

More than 70 people were arrested Saturday at protests in the UK against the Palestine Action group being proscribed a terrorist organisation by the British government following a break-in and vandalism at a Royal Air Force base. Signs with the wording "I oppose genocide, I support Palestine Action," were held aloft in silence as the protesters were surrounded by police officers.

Kim extends support to Russia against 'the Ukrainian crisis'

WONSAN/ KYIV, 13 JULY

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un offered Moscow his "unconditional support" on the war in Ukraine, during his meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, according to state media reports.

"We exchanged views on the situation surrounding the Ukrainian crisis," Lavrov said at a press conference following the meeting, as quoted by the Russian state media agency TASS.

"Our Korean friends confirmed their firm support for all the objectives of the special military operation, as well as for the actions of the Russian leadership and armed forces."

Kim reportedly said that North Korea stood by "all the measures taken by the Russian leadership" to tackle the "root cause of the Ukrainian crisis".

Pyongyang is reportedly preparing to deploy an additional 25,000 to 30,000 soldiers to aid Russia's offensive in Ukraine. These forces would add to the estimated 11,000 North Korean soldiers sent to Russia last year.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov **PHOTO: X @MFA_RUSSIA**

UKRAINE KILLS SPY'S ASSASINS

The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) said it tracked down and killed Russian agents suspected of shooting one of its senior officers to death in the Ukrainian capital.

The SBU said that the suspected Russian agents were killed in the Kyiv region after they offered resistance to arrest. A video released by the agency showed two bodies lying on the ground.

The agency said earlier that a man and a woman were suspected to be involved in the assassination of Ivan Voronych, an SBU Colonel, in a bold daylight. *—Agencies*

The latest round of violence in eastern Congo was linked to militia group which allegedly has connections to the IS **PHOTO: EPA PHOTO**

IS-linked rebels kill 66 in eastern Congo

KINSHASAN 13 JULY

Rebels affiliated with the Islamic State group killed 66 people in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, local officials said Saturday.

Fighters with the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has ties to IS, killed the civilians in Irumu, bordering Uganda. The attack comes as eastern Congo may see an end to its ongoing war with M23, a separate rebel group which is backed by Rwanda, another of Congo's neighbors.

Jean Tobie Okala, the spokesperson for the United Nations mission in Ituri in eastern Congo, called the attack a "bloodbath."

"Around 30 civilians were killed between Thursday and Friday, in the Walese Vonkutu chiefdom, Irumu territory, in Ituri," said Okala in a statement to the Associated Press. "Based on information from civil society, the death toll has risen from 31 to 66 civilians killed."

The ADF is an Ugandan Islamist group that operates on both sides of the porous border. All the victims, including women, were killed with machetes, said the president of a local civil society, Marcel Paluku. The number of people taken hostage is unknown.

The attack is suspected to be in response to an escalating bombing campaign by joint Congolese and Ugandan forces that started on Sunday. *—PTI*

A HERITAGE TO HOLD

Hungary's oldest library fights to save 1L books from beetles

PANNONHALMA, 13 JULY

Tens of thousands of centuries-old books are being pulled from the shelves of a medieval abbey in Hungary in an effort to save them from a beetle infestation that could wipe out centuries of history.

The 1,000-year-old Pannonhalma Archabbey is a sprawling Benedictine monastery that is one of Hungary's oldest centres of learning and a UNESCO World Heritage site. Restoration workers are removing about 100,000 handbound books from their shelves and carefully placing them in crates, the start of a disinfection process.

The drugstore beetle, also known as the bread beetle, is often found among dried foodstuffs like grains, flour and spices. But they also are attracted to the gelatin and starch-based adhesives found in books.

They have been found in a section of the library housing around a quarter of the abbey's 400,000 volumes.

The beetle invasion was first detected during a routine library cleaning. Employees noticed unusual layers of dust on the shelves and then saw that holes had been burrowed into some of the book spines. Upon opening the volumes, burrow holes could be seen in the paper where the beetles chewed through.

The abbey at Pannonhalma was founded in 996, four years before the establishment of the Hungarian Kingdom. The abbey houses the country's oldest collection of books, as well as many of its earliest and most important written records. *—PTI*

The 1,000-year-old Pannonhalma Archabbey is a sprawling Benedictine monastery **PHOTO: X**

Iran's Prez injured in assassination plot: Report

TEHRAN, 13 JULY

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian was lightly injured in an Israeli airstrike on 16 June, according to reports from the IRGC-affiliated Fars News Agency. The missile struck a building in western Tehran during a meeting of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, injuring Pezeshkian in the leg.

Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Judiciary Chief Mohseni Ejei, and other senior officials were also present at the time of the attack. The airstrike, which reportedly targeted entry and exit points to hinder escape and disrupt ventilation, echoed the Israeli tactics used in the assassination of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

Following the explosions, power was cut on the lower floors where the officials were situated. Fortunately, an emergency exit was pre-arranged, allowing them to escape with minor injuries. Investigations into potential infiltration are underway due to the precision of the attack. *—Agencies*

Wyndham Hotels to open over 50 units in India

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

World's largest hotel franchisor Wyndham Hotels and Resorts sees India becoming one of its top markets with more than 50 hotels in the pipeline and plans to bring more brands to the country, according to top company officials.

Wyndham Hotels and Resorts' President for Europe, Middle East, Eurasia and Africa, Dimitris Manikis, and Market Managing Director for Eurasia, Rahool Macarius, shared the franchisor's expansion plans for India. "Talking about the pipeline, as we speak, we have more than 50 hotels in the pipeline and growing. So today, I might say 50 and tomorrow the number would change. So it's a moving goal post for us but it's a very fast and sprinting goal post for us," Rahool said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Mercedes-Benz India to hike prices by 1-1.5%

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Mercedes-Benz India has announced a price increase of 1-1.5 per cent scheduled for September, citing ongoing fluctuations of the rupee against the euro. Managing Director and CEO Santosh Iyer confirmed that the company has already raised vehicle prices twice this year, in January and July. Despite concerns that increased prices might affect sales, Iyer pointed out that reduced interest rates are helping to balance higher equated monthly installments for buyers. With 80 per cent of new car sales financed, he remains optimistic about continued demand in the luxury car segment, which has grown by 5-6 per cent this year, outpacing the overall market. Iyer said supply chain issues have not impacted their production, as the company manages stocks effectively. *—PTI*

FSSAI to Food Biz: Ensure accuracy in annual returns

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Food safety regulator FSSAI has asked all Food Business Operators to ensure absolute accuracy in all their annual return submissions, reiterating that providing false or misleading information will attract severe penalties. Compliance with requirements is paramount for safe food ecosystem, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) said in a post on X. Earlier this month, the FSSAI wrote to the food safety units of all the states and sensitised about the must-be-followed compliances. FSSAI had in December 2020 mandated the filing of Annual Returns for 2020-21 onwards exclusively through the online FoSCoS platform. *—ANI*

FGD rule ease to cut electricity cost by 25-30P/unit

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The government's move to ease sulphur emission rules for most coal-fired power plants strikes a delicate balance between costs, climate and compliance and is expected to cut electricity costs by 25-30 paise per unit, officials said on Sunday. In a notification, the government has restricted the 2015 mandate of installing flue-gas desulphurisation (FGD) systems that remove sulphur from a power plants' exhaust gases, only to plants located within 10kms of cities with a population exceeding one million. Plants in critically polluted areas or non-attainment cities will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis while all other plants are exempt from mandatory FGD installation. The authorities said the decision was prompted by a detailed analysis by Central Pollution Control Board. *—PTI*

Q1 earnings, trade talks, inflation to rule markets

Uncertainty over Trump's tariff decisions is a key factor

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

PHOTO: FREEPIK

In an event-heavy week, stock investors will track quarterly earnings of several bluechip firms, the likely outcome of ongoing India-US trade talks, and inflation data for market cues, analysts said on Sunday.

Moreover, global market trends and trading activity of foreign investors would also guide movement in equities, they said.

"While global cues will continue to dictate trends in domestic equities, investors' focus will be on the likely outcome of India's ongoing trade negotiations with the US. Overall sentiments continue in a dilemma as the wait for a trade deal with the US continues. Traders are not confident about taking any major positive bets in this uncertain environment.

"In contrast, first-quarter corporate earnings will be keenly watched over the next few weeks...," SimranJeet Singh Bhatia, Senior Equity Research Analyst at financial services provider Almondz Global, said.

Markets drifted lower during the last week and lost over a per cent, primarily pressured by the lingering uncertainty surrounding global tariffs and a disappointing start to the earnings season, an expert said.

"Looking ahead, the earnings season will be in full focus. A packed calendar includes results from HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Axis Bank, Wipro, JSW Steel, among others. On the macroeconomic front, participants will closely track the WPI and CPI inflation data scheduled for 14 July, for further cues on the economy," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

Globally, markets will watch for any updates related to trade negotiations and tariffs, along with key economic data releases such as US inflation and China's GDP numbers, he added.

While the tone remained largely stable in the first three sessions, profit-booking in the final sessions dragged the indices lower, Mishra said.

Sentiment weakened amid heightened global trade tensions following US President Donald Trump's renewed tariff threats on Canada and other key partners, Mishra added. *— PTI*

8 of top 10 firms lose ₹2L cr value

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Last week, the combined market valuation of eight out of the top ten valued firms in India fell by Rs 2.07 lakh crore (Rs 2,07,501.58 crore), with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Bharti Airtel facing the steepest declines.

During this period, the benchmark BSE Sensex experienced a drop of 932.42 points, equivalent to a 1.11 per cent decrease. From the top ten pack, only Bajaj Finance and Hindustan Unilever (HUL) managed to record gains in their market valuation.

TCS saw its market capitalization tumble by Rs 56,279.35 crore, falling to Rs 11,81,450.30 crore, following disappointing June quarter earnings that failed to inspire confidence among investors. Similarly, Bharti Airtel's valuation eroded by Rs 54,483.62 crore, bringing its total down to Rs 10,95,887.62 crore.

Reliance Industries witnessed a decline of Rs 44,048.2 crore, now valued at Rs 20,22,901.67 crore, while Infosys experienced a loss of Rs 18,818.86 crore, closing at Rs 6,62,564.94 crore. Other significant declines were noted for ICICI Bank, with a decrease of Rs 14,556.84 crore, and Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), which saw a drop of Rs 11,954.25 crore.

In contrast, HUL's market capitalisation surged by Rs 42,363.13 crore to Rs 5,92,120.49 crore after announcing Priya Nair as its first female CEO and Managing Director. Meanwhile, Bajaj Finance gained Rs 5,033.57 crore, with a new market valuation of Rs 5,80,010.68 crore. *—PTI*

Electronics, pharma made 70% PLI pay outs in FY25

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Large-scale electronics manufacturing and pharmaceuticals cornered about 70 per cent of the total fiscal incentive disbursements in 2024-25 under the production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes, according to government data.

The scheme was introduced in 2021 to support domestic manufacturing across 14 sectors with an outlay of Rs 1.97 lakh crore.

In 2024-25, the government has disbursed a total of Rs 10,114 crore. PLI firms in the electronics sector received Rs 5,732 crore, while pharmaceutical drugs received Rs 2,328 crore, the data showed.

The figures highlight the country's growing strength in these segments amid efforts to boost manufacturing and value-added exports. *—PTI*

2M BARRELS A DAY

India's Russian oil purchase at 11-month high

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

India's import of crude oil from Russia rose to an 11-month high in June as refiners topped up tanks amid the Israel-Iran war, analysts said.

India imported 2.08 million barrels per day (bpd) of Russian crude in June, the highest since July 2024, according to vessel tracking data from global commodity market analytics firm Kpler.

"While India's global imports of crude oil dropped by 6 per cent in June, Russian volumes saw an 8 per cent month-on-month rise to their highest levels since July 2024," European think tank Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said.

"More than half of these imports from Russia were made by three refineries in India, which also export refined products to G7+ countries."

India imports more than 85 per cent of its requirement of crude oil, which is turned into fuels like petrol and diesel in refineries.

Traditionally, the Middle East was the main source, but Russia has been the mainstay supplier for nearly three years now.

After much of the West shunned Russian crude following Moscow's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Russia began offering steep discounts to attract alternative buyers. Indian refiners seized the opportunity, turning Russia, once a marginal supplier, into India's largest source of crude oil, overtaking traditional suppliers from West Asia. Russia now accounts for as much as 40 per cent of India's oil imports.

In June, India imported approximately 8,93,000 barrels per day of crude from Iraq - its second-largest supplier - marking a 17.2 per cent month-on-month decline. *—PTI*

NLC India, Russian firm in talks for Lithium sourcing

State-owned NLC India is reportedly in advanced discussions with a Russian government-owned entity to secure lithium from a mine in Africa. This development is crucial as India strives to ensure a stable supply of lithium to meet the growing demand for clean energy. Sources indicate that NLC India is negotiating with a public sector company from Russia for equity participation in a lithium block located in Mali. Recognising the surging demand for this essential mineral, particularly from electric vehicle battery manufacturers, India is actively pursuing the exploration and development of lithium resources both domestically and abroad.

The NLC India has been diversifying into renewable energy and coal mining ventures globally. *—PTI*

Goyal highlights growth across multiple sectors

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

PHOTO: ANI

- During a visit to Srinagar, Goyal met with delegations from the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the MSME Development Forum's Kashmir Chapter

Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal shared key developments from the past week, reflecting the government's continued push to strengthen India's trade, industrial, and infrastructure landscape.

In a high-level meeting with the Chairman of State Bank of India, along with top executives from other major banks, ECGC Ltd., and senior ministry officials, the minister reviewed the status of export credit and explored new opportunities to bolster India's export financing ecosystem.

During a visit to Srinagar, Goyal met with delegations from the Kashmir Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the MSME Development Forum's Kashmir Chapter, reinforcing the government's commitment to empowering local businesses.

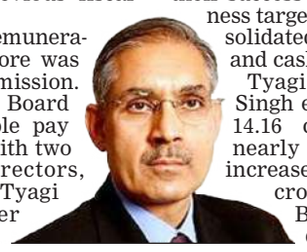
He also interacted with stakeholders from the Jammu & Kashmir Fruits and Vegetable Processing and Integrated Cold Chain Association, focusing on the potential of agri-value chains in the region.

In Bengaluru, the minister toured key units at the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) Aerospace SEZ in Devanahalli. Further, a review meeting through the Project Monitoring Group (PMG) was held to resolve critical issues impacting major infrastructure projects in Gujarat and Rajasthan. *—ANI*

DLF chairman Rajiv's pay hiked by 34%

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Rajiv Singh, the Chairman of DLF, India's largest real estate firm, saw his remuneration leap by 34 per cent to Rs 36.65 crore for the last fiscal year, as reported in the company's latest annual report. This increase comes in light of improved financial performance, rising from Rs 27.30 crore in the previous fiscal year.



Of the total remuneration, Rs 34.53 crore was received as commission. The company's Board approved variable pay to Singh along with two managing directors, Ashok Kumar Tyagi and Devinder Singh, based on their success in meeting business targets including consolidated profit after tax and cash flows.

Tyagi and Devinder Singh each received Rs 14.16 crore, marking nearly a 5 per cent increase from Rs 13.52 crore last year. Both managing directors were appointed on 4 August 2023.

DLF reported a net profit surge to Rs 4,366.82 crore from Rs 2,723.53 crore, while total income rose to Rs 8,995.89 crore from Rs 6,958.34 crore. Additionally, record sales bookings of Rs 21,223 crore were achieved, a 44 per cent increase from the previous year, with ambitious targets set for future sales. *—PTI*

SpaceX to support Musk's xAI with $2B investment, reports WSJ

BENGALURU, 13 JULY

SpaceX has committed USD 2 billion to Elon Musk's artificial intelligence venture, xAI, as part of a USD 5 billion equity round, according to The Wall Street Journal. The move strengthens ties between Musk's companies, with xAI recently merging with social media platform X (formerly Twitter).

The combined firm is now valued at USD 113 billion. xAI's chatbot, Grok, already supports customer service for SpaceX's Starlink and is being considered for future integration into Tesla's humanoid robot, Optimus.

When asked on X whether Tesla might also invest in xAI, Musk responded, "It would be great, but subject to board and shareholder approval," without confirming or denying the reported SpaceX investment.

Neither SpaceX, Tesla, nor xAI have issued official statements. Reuters was unable to independently verify the report.

Despite facing criticism over some of Grok's responses, Musk has touted it as "the smartest AI in the world." *—Agencies*

PHOTO: ANI

Cipla to enter India's weight mgmt sector

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Cipla is set to enter India's weight management market, according to MD and Global CEO Umang Vohra in the company's 2024–25 Annual Report. Highlighting obesity as an emerging priority, Vohra said Cipla aims to meet growing demand with effective, stigma-free solutions. The move comes as global players like Eli Lilly and Novo Nordisk have already introduced their anti-obesity drugs, Mounjaro and Wegovy, in India.

Cipla is also strengthening its presence in the central nervous system (CNS) space, having in-licensed Sanofi's CNS portfolio in India, including the leading anti-epileptic brand Frisium. The company plans to expand into niche areas such as ADHD and Parkinson's through similar deals or acquisitions.

In addition, Cipla is developing four novel drugs to tackle antimicrobial resistance (AMR), signalling a shift from volume-based to innovation-led growth. With revenues of Rs 27,548 crore and net profit of Rs 5,272 crore in FY25, Cipla is focused on science, sustainability, and patient-centric care. *—PTI*

ANALYSTS SAY

Taiwanese, Vietnamese firms eye Indian footwear sector

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Companies from Taiwan and Vietnam are keen to invest in India's non-leather footwear sector, and the government support is crucial to facilitate these investments, Council for Leather Exports (CLE) Chairman RK Jalan said on Sunday.

Jalan said these Taiwanese and Vietnamese firms import products like shoe soles, moulds, machinery, and fabrics from countries like China.

"Vietnamese and Taiwanese firms are keen to invest in India. We need to support them so that they can import these goods smoothly into the country for their manufacturing facilities," he said.

The country's exports are growing at a healthy rate, and the council is aiming for USD 7 billion worth of shipments in 2025-26, he added.

The exports stood at USD 5.75 billion in 2024-25. The US was the top destination for Indian exporters with shipments worth USD 957 million. It was followed by the UK (11 per cent) and Germany. *—PTI*

Income tax refunds jump 474% since 2013–14

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Income Tax refunds have jumped 474 per cent in the last 11 years to Rs 4.77 lakh crore in 2024-25, significantly outpacing the 274 per cent growth in gross tax collections, sources said on Sunday. There has been an 81 per cent decrease in number of days it takes to issue income tax refunds decreasing from 93 days in 2013 to just 17 days in 2024.

As of 2013-14, refunds issued by the Income Tax department was at Rs 83,008 crore. Whereas, at the end of 2024-25, the 11th year of the ongoing NDA rule, I-T refunds stood at Rs 4.77 lakh crore, showing a 474 per cent growth during the period. Gross direct tax collection grew 274 per cent to Rs 27.03 lakh crore as of 2024-25, from Rs 7.22 lakh crore as of 2013-14. There has been a 133 per cent growth in I-T returns filed since 2013. A total of 3.8 crore ITRs were filed in 2013, which has risen to 8.89 crore in 2024.

Sources said this massive increase in tax refunds and decrease in number of days to issue refunds is due to improvements in tax administration, especially with the adoption of digital infrastructure including end-to-end online filing and faceless assessment that enables faster and more accurate processing of ITRs. The introduction of pre-filled returns, automation in refund processing, real-time TDS adjustments and online grievance redress mechanisms have led to reduced delays and improved taxpayer experience.

Refunds as proportion of gross direct taxes collected also rose to 17.6 per cent as of 2024-25, from 11.5 per cent in 2013-14. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@REALDONALDTRUMP

Trump is attending FIFA Club World Cup final

WASHINGTON, 13 JULY

President Donald Trump on Sunday will attend the FIFA Club World Cup final, a match that will offer Trump a preview of the globe's premier soccer tournament that North America will host next year. Trump and first lady Melania Trump will travel from their golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, to East Rutherford, 40 miles (64 kilometers) away, to watch the final match of the U.S.-hosted tournament between Paris Saint-Germain and Chelsea at MetLife Stadium. Trump's trip Sunday falls on the first anniversary of the assassination attempt he survived in Butler, Pennsylvania, while campaigning for president. The president did not have any public plans to mark the date beyond participating in a taped Fox News Channel interview with his daughter-in-law, Lara Trump, that aired Saturday night.—*PTI*

Shooting trials begin for 2027 National Games

SHILLONG, 13 JULY

The Shooting Association of Meghalaya on Sunday said it has initiated a series of trials to identify the best talent from the state, which is gearing up to host the 2027 National Games. The 39th edition of the National Games, a prestigious sporting event in the country, will be held in Shillong for the first time. It will bring together top athletes in various disciplines from across the nation. Officials are confident that the exposure and experience gained through the trials will translate into a competitive edge at the Games. "We are committed to not only participating but also excelling at the national level," said JF Kharshiing, President of the Shooting Association of Meghalaya.—*PTI*

IOA president Usha names panel on BFI poll delay

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha has constituted a three-member Fact-Finding Committee to ascertain the reasons for the prolonged delay in conducting the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) elections and to recommend a roadmap to ensure fair and timely polls. The committee, formed on Friday, is chaired by IOA Treasurer Sahdev Yadav, with IOA Executive Council member Bhupender Singh Bajwa and Advocate Payal Kakra as members. The term of the current Executive Committee of the BFI ended on 2 February and fresh elections have not been conducted since—*PTI*

PHOTO: X/@CHESSFESTIVAL

Harikrishnan A Ra becomes 87th Grandmaster

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

The first thing Grandmaster Shyam Sundar Mohanraj noticed about Harikrishnan A. Ra was his calculation skills when he joined his academy, Chess Thulir, in Chennai, as an early bird in 2022. Harikrishnan, 24, earned his third GM-norm at the La Plagne International Chess Festival in France on Friday, becoming the country's 87th Grandmaster and bringing joy to his coach, Mohanraj, who has seen two players from his academy become Grandmasters in months. The Chennai-based Harikrishnan earned his first GM norm some years back. He then gained his second one at the Andujar Open in Spain.—*PTI*

Washington's strikes keep England in check

In the morning, Mohammed Siraj struck twice

LONDON, 13 JULY

Resuming the final session at 175 for 6, England lost their remaining four wickets for just 17 runs, with premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah (2/38) taking two of them.

Spin all-rounder Washington Sundar (4/22), who had struck twice in the second session to leave England reeling at tea, dismissed skipper Ben Stokes (33) soon after the break before removing last man Shoaib Bashir (2).

Bumrah accounted for Chris Woakes (10) and Brydon Carse (1) as England folded quickly.

Earlier in the second session, Sundar cleaned up first-innings centurion Joe Root (40) to break a 67-run stand with Stokes, before rattling the off stump of Jamie Smith (5) in the 47th over.

In the morning, Mohammed Siraj struck twice while Akash Deep and Nitish Kumar Reddy picked up a wicket each as England went to lunch at 98 for 4.

India were bowled out for 387 in their first innings on Friday, matching England's total.

ANDERSON TENDULKAR TROPHY

India's bowler Washington Sundar celebrates the wicket of England's batter Joe Root during the fourth day of the third Test match
PHOTO: PTI

Akash Deep suffers injury

Indian pacer Akash Deep left the field after a suspected injury on Day four of the Lord's Test between India and England on Sunday.

The fast-bowler was seen kneeling across the boundary line, speaking to the team physio right after his spell before exiting the field of play.

The Bihar speedster picked the crucial wicket of Harry Brook in the first innings of play. Akash bowled an eight-over spell on either side of the interval, conceding 30 runs.

He went wicketless in the first innings, giving away 92 runs in 23 overs as England posted 387. He also slammed a solitary six with the bat against England pacer Jofra Archer.

Despite missing his services, India will have Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, and Nitish Reddy in its ranks, apart from two spin options in Ravindra Jadeja and Washington Sundar.

Akash made his way back to the field after the drinks break, succeeding the 37th over of play. —*PTI*

MINOR INJURY

India's Avinash Mukund Sable and France's Nicolas-Marie Daru fall in the men's 3000m steeplechase event *PHOTO: PTI*

Sable will be fine in 1-2 weeks: Coach

NEW DELHI, 13 JULY

Seasoned Indian steeplechaser Avinash Sable sustained a minor injury due to a nasty fall during the Monaco Diamond League two days back, but he will be all right in quick time, his long-time coach Amrish Kumar said on Sunday.

Asian Games champion and national record holder Sable failed to finish the men's 3000m steeplechase event on Friday as he fell during the water jump early in the race. He was seen clutching his lower thigh area just at the back of the knee as he left the race. "Sable has suffered a minor injury around the knee. He will take rest and he should be all right in one or two weeks at the maximum. It is not much to worry about," Kumar, who is with the Army Sports Institute in Pune, told PTI. "He (Sable) was trying to protect the runner ahead of him and who just jumped over the water barrier. While doing that, he fell; this kind of thing happens in a race," he added.

The athlete ahead of him lost balance and went down, causing Sable to stumble as well. It was Kumar who spotted Sable after he joined the Indian Army in 2012. Kumar made Sable shift to steeplechase from cross country run in 2017 and nurtured him into a top athlete..

With just one point from three DL meetings this season, it will be difficult for the 30-year-old Sable to make it to the DL Finals on August 27-28 in Zurich, Switzerland. —*PTI*

EVIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

England's Lottie misses out on history as Grace snatches play-off win

EVIAN-LES-BAINS, 13 JULY

Grace Kim delivered one stunning shot after another Sunday in the Evian Championship, starting with an eagle to force a playoff and another eagle to beat Jeeno Thitikul on the second extra hole to make her first LPGA win a major title.

Kim, whose 2-foot eagle putt on the par-5 18th in regulation gave her a 4-under 67, looked to be just as surprised as everyone else when she rolled in a 12-foot eagle putt to win the playoff. The 24-year-old Australian calmly placed her hand over her mouth and stood still before doubling over and breaking into a wide smile.

Thitikul's biggest challenge had been English amateur Lottie Woad, who was coming off a win in the Irish Women's Open and at one point had the lead on the back nine of Evian Resort. She closed with 64 and then waited to see if that would be enough.

Woad was bidding to become the first amateur to win a major since Catherine Lacoste at the 1967 U.S. Women's Open.

Thitikul birdied the 17th to take the lead, and the Thai player was on the verge of her first major when she laid up short of the pond and hit a wedge into 8 feet on the final hole. —*PTI*

Dean, Wyatt-Hodge shine in England's nervy last-ball win

BIRMINGHAM, 13 JULY

Three wickets for Charlie Dean and Danni Wyatt-Hodge's half-century in her 300th match for England set up a consolation victory for the hosts, who then held their nerve to pull off the highest successful run-chase in women's T20Is on their home turf in another last-ball thriller against India, who won the series 3-2.

Wyatt-Hodge and Sophia Dunkley put on a 101-run opening stand, which allowed England to reel in a target of 168, set largely by Shafali Verma's 75. Once they fell, however, England's pursuit grew tougher and they needed six off the final over, which yielded two wickets for Arundhati Reddy, but Sophie Ecclestone held her cool to take England over the line.

Charlie Dean

Shafali wrapped up her comeback in T20Is with her best innings of the series at Edgbaston, a 41-ball knock which rescued India from 19 for 2 in the third over and helped them to a respectable total of 167 for 7 despite none of her team-mates reaching 25 and only three joining her in double figures.

England 168 for 5 (Wyatt-Hodge 56, Dunkley 46, Deepti 2-31, Arundhati 2-47) beat India 167 for 7 (Shafali 75, Dean 3-23, Ecclestone 2-28) by five wickets —*PTI*

WPL has played for progress: Muzumdar

India coach Amol Muzumdar credited the landmark achievement of clinching the first-ever women's T20I series win against England to the Women's Premier League, saying it had played an "integral part" in the progress of the players. He also credited the competitive domestic season for the success.

Poland beat Denmark for their first-ever tournament win

LUCERNE, 13 JULY

Natalia Padilla scored one goal and set up the others for Poland's first-ever Women's European Championship win, 3-2 over Denmark in their final group game on Saturday.

Poland is appearing in the tournament for the first time, and the Spanish-born Padilla got the country's first-ever goal when she opened the scoring in the 13th minute, pouncing on a rebound to fire past Maja Bay Østergaard after Ewa Pajor's initial effort was blocked at the right post.

"We waited a long time for it," Poland coach Nina Patalon told UEFA. "We wanted to score that one goal, and we scored three. Today I am so proud of my girls and just so, so happy." Padilla followed her goal by crossing for Pajor to head in the second in the 20th. Denmark suffered another blow five minutes later when captain Pernille Harder went off with what looked like a hamstring injury. Denmark was already without Emma Snerle, who suffered a head injury during Tuesday's 2-1 loss to Germany. —*PTI*

Iga Swiatek wins Wimbledon after a doping case and a title drought

LONDON, 13 JULY

For weeks while back home in Warsaw last year, Iga Swiatek hung out with friends and made new ones, but didn't dare tell them about a doping case that was hanging over her.

"Obviously, in the back of my mind," she said Saturday evening at the All England Club, "I had this thing."

There was more going on, too, and she only opened up to her family and her team. A coaching change. A long-for-her title drought. A ranking drop. Her grandfather's passing.

"It all (happened) together," Swiatek said. "It wasn't easy."

And so, in some ways, the Wimbledon championship Swiatek claimed Saturday with a 6-0, 6-0 victory, yes, read that score again in 57 minutes over Amanda Anisimova, could be viewed as more than merely a significant on-court result.

It mattered, of course, that she finally conquered grass courts, in general, and that venue, in particular. The 24-year-old from Poland became the youngest woman with at least one major trophy on all three surfaces since 2002, when Serena Williams did it at age 20. That Swiatek now needs only an Australian Open title to complete a career Grand Slam.

Iga Swiatek

In the bigger picture, though, this triumph followed a difficult 12-plus months and provided the following takeaway, in Swiatek's words: "The lesson is just that even when you feel like you're not on a good path, you can always get back to it if you put enough effort and you have good people around you."

There was a not-long-ago stretch in which she was considered far and away the best in women's tennis. —*PTI*

New Zealand rings in changes to tri-series squad

WILLINGTON, 13 JULY

Devon Conway, Mitch Hay, Jimmy Neesham, and Tim Robinson will join the New Zealand T20I squad for the upcoming Tri-Series against Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Wicketkeeper-batter Conway replaces Finn Allen, who was due to miss the series due to a foot injury he picked up while playing in the Major League Cricket (MLC) in the United States of America. Hay, Neesham, and Robinson join the squad as additional cover for Michael Bracewell, Mark Chapman, Glenn Phillips, and Rachin Ravindra, who are involved in the Major League Cricket tournament final on Monday. The Kiwis' head coach, Rob Walte, was disappointed that Finn Allen wouldn't be a part of the setup. "We're gutted for Finn," said Walter. "I was looking forward to working with him and to seeing him continue his form from the MLC, but unfortunately, injuries happen. "We're lucky to be able to call on someone of Devon's quality to replace Finn." The triangular series kicks off with a contest between the host Zimbabwe and South Africa on Monday, 14 July. New Zealand will feature in their first encounter on Wednesday, 16 July against South Africa. Each side will play the other twice before a final, which will be played on 26 July. —*PTI*

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER HISTORY

Messi nets 5th consecutive multi-goal performance

FORT LAUDERDALE, 13 JULY

Lionel Messi extended his historic streak to five straight multi-goal games, and Inter Miami snapped Nashville SC's 15-match unbeaten streak with a 2-1 win on Saturday night.

Miami (11-3-5) won its fifth straight match and moved to fifth in the Supporters' Shield standings as it aims to win the title for the second-straight season. Messi entered Saturday's match as the only player in Major League Soccer history with four straight multi-goal games after scoring two in Miami's win over the New England Revolution on Wednesday. And he wasn't done. The 38-year-old opened the scoring Saturday on a free kick in the 17th minute. Then,

Lionel Messi

after Nashville tied it early in the second half, Messi put his side back on top with a steal and a score in the 62nd. Messi now has 16 goals in 16 MLS matches this season, which is tied with Nashville's Sam Surridge (16 goals in 21 matches) for most in the league. Nashville (12-5-5), which had won five straight entering the match, had jumped to third in the Supporters' Shield Standings during its unbeaten streak that went back to mid-April across all competitions. It was also the longest active streak of its kind in MLS and Nashville's best stretch in its six-season club history.

FIFA SAYS IT HAS AN AGREEMENT WITH PLAYERS

FIFA says players' representatives and the sport's governing body have reached a consensus on the need for a period of rest of 72 hours between matches, and agreed that players should enjoy a minimum of 21 days of holidays at the end of each season. The discussions took place on the eve of the Club World Cup final between PSG and Chelsea. The tournament was held during the European off-season and has faced criticism from unions, as an increased focus on player welfare has been leading to calls for mandatory rest periods and a greater emphasis on player safety during matches. —*PTI*

Ivan Ivanov wins Wimbledon junior title

LONDON, 13 JULY

Ivan Ivanov of Bulgaria won his first Grand Slam title by beating Ronit Karki of the United States 6-2, 6-3 in the Wimbledon juniors final on Sunday. The 16-year-old Ivanov became the second Bulgarian to win the title after Dimitrov in 2008. He never faced a break point against Karki and finished with 22 winners, compared to six for his opponent.Karki was trying to become the first qualifier to win the title since Noah Rubin in 2014. —*PTI*